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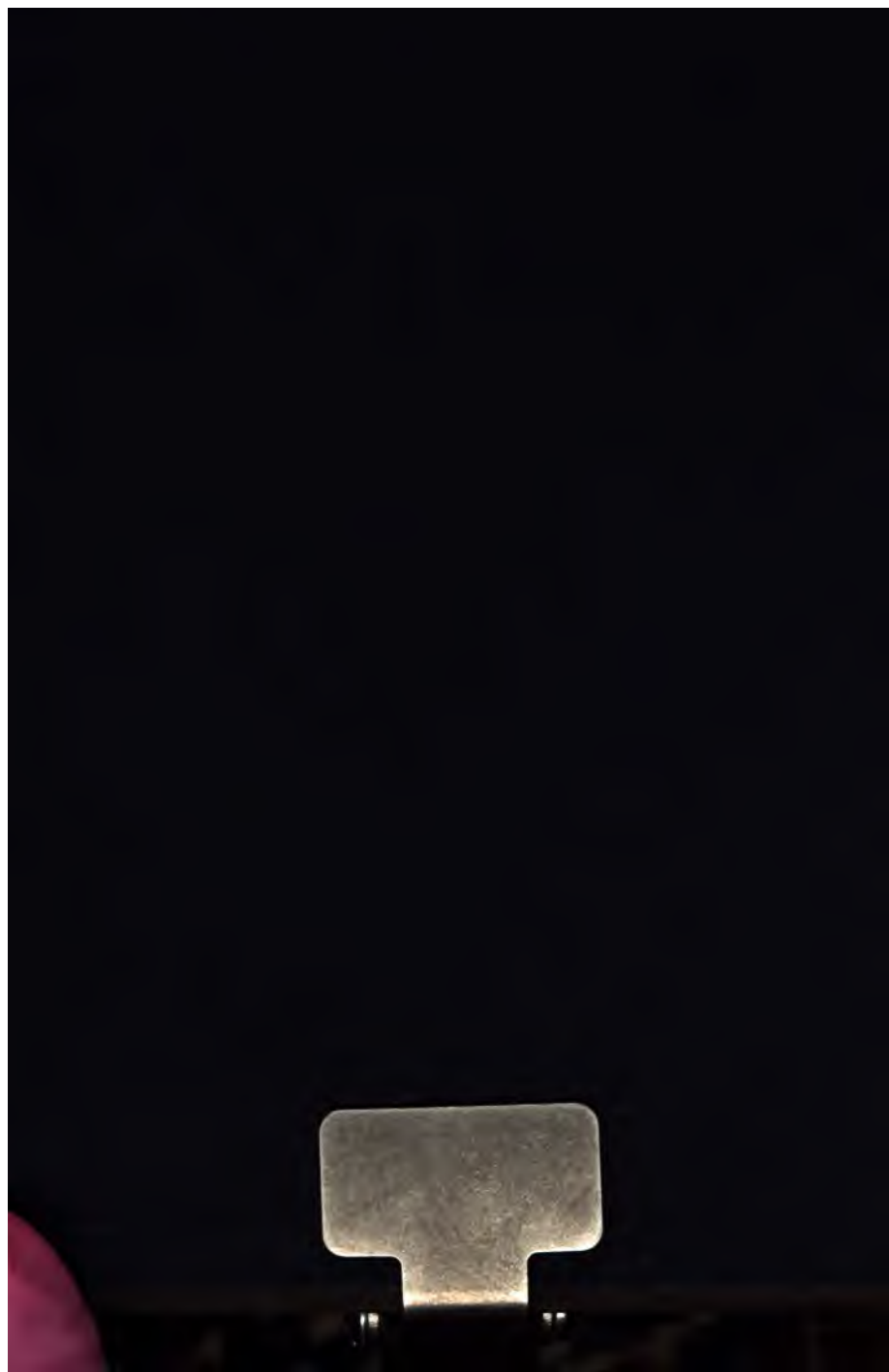
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**THE**  
**PRESENT TRIAL OF FAITH.**





THE  
PRESENT TRIAL OF FAITH,

BEING  
SERMONS

Preached in St. Martin's Church, Leicester,

BY

DAVID J. VAUGHAN, M.A.,

HONORARY CANON OF PETERBOROUGH CATHEDRAL; VICAR OF ST. MARTIN'S, LEICESTER,  
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TO  
**The Parishioners and Congregation**

OF  
**St. Martin's, Leicester,**

THIS  
VOLUME OF SERMONS,  
PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF THOSE WHOSE WISH IN SUCH A MATTER  
WAS FELT AS A COMMAND,

IS  
RESPECTFULLY AND AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED,  
IN THE RECOLLECTION OF  
EIGHTEEN YEARS OF PASTORAL INTERCOURSE.



## PREFACE.

THE Sermons contained in this volume have no claim to be considered anything more than ordinary Parish Sermons. With one exception, they were preached in my own Church precisely as they are printed, or with only such slight verbal alterations as the passage through the press necessarily implies.

I have, however, united them under one distinctive title, as 'The Present Trial of Faith;' partly, because the thought expressed by the title has been the prevailing and dominant thought in the composition of them; and, partly, because those kind friends, at whose request they are now published, were of opinion that many besides themselves 'would find in them the very answer they are often seeking in vain to old questions which in our age have taken new forms.'

The distinctive title which I have adopted was intended to intimate that possibly some assistance might be

found in the volume towards the removal of doubts and perplexities which press very heavily upon many minds. I shall be very thankful if this should prove to be the case.

In the Table of Contents will be found the date when each Sermon was preached. The date will be sufficient to explain the allusions to passing events which are scattered through the Sermons.

*St. Martin's Vicarage, Leicester,*

*February 18th, 1878.*

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## SERMON I.

### THE DAYS OF THE SON OF MAN.

LUKE xviii. 8.

Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?

THE question is asked; but it receives no answer from Him who asked it. Like that other famous question of His: 'What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he? If David call him Lord, how is he his son?'—it is flung down, as it were, before the world, for each generation of men in turn to shape its own answer to it. Were we in search of arguments to prove the Divine Nature of the speaker, we could find one *here*,—in the strength, and in the consciousness of strength, which could venture so fearlessly to put such questions to the ever-widening audience of the ages to come.

We, then, in our turn, would, on this first evening of our Advent Season, take up this question of Jesus, and consider what it suggests and what kind of answer we must return to it:— 'Nevertheless when the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?'

A very slight study of the context will satisfy you that the question, thus asked and designedly left unanswered, closes a discourse which commences at the twenty-second verse of the preceding chapter; a discourse which grew out of a question of the Pharisees, but which is addressed solely to the disciples,

that is, specially to the Twelve. The question of our text, I say, *closes* the discourse—is the last word of Jesus, on that particular occasion, upon that particular subject. For in the next verse He passes to another subject, and is addressing evidently a different audience: ‘And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others.’ Now if you trace the discourse carefully back, from the words of our text, through the previous verses of this eighteenth chapter and the later verses of the preceding, the seventeenth chapter, you will find no break in the chain of thought, until you come to the twentieth verse of that seventeenth chapter. From that point the discourse flows on in one continuous stream, until it terminates in the striking question of our text.

Now the starting-point of the discourse is as striking, arrests the attention as decisively, as the termination. St. Luke’s words are these: ‘And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, *when* the Kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation:’—that is, cometh not in such fashion that it can be observed or watched, and its progress noted, day by day and week by week, as an outward and visible object or fact:—‘The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo, here! or, lo, there! for, behold, the Kingdom of God is within you.’ No words could more distinctly assert: First, that the Kingdom of God is a *present* fact,—a thing as much of the present as of the future; secondly, that the direct and immediate sphere of its operations is the *spirit* of man,—the heart, the soul, the conscience, the will; and, thirdly, that it is impossible to *localize* it,—to confine it to this or that particular place, any more than to this or that particular time.

The Kingdom of God, then, is a spiritual, a universal fact. But, though thus spiritual and universal, or, rather, perhaps I ought to say, *because* it *is* thus spiritual and universal, it has its special manifestations, its more distinctive revelations of its

presence and operation, *here* and *there*, *now* and *then*, in this or that particular place, at this or that particular time. But *these*, be it remembered, are but the outward manifestations, the occasional revelations, of that which *always* is, and is *everywhere*. To trace, in the outward manifestation, the hidden, everlasting fact and law, *this* is the art of arts, the science of sciences, whether we be students of the great world of nature or of the more complex world of human affairs. The fall of the apple from the tree, on a still autumn day, can suggest to a Newton the mysterious force which retains the moon in her orbit round the earth, and makes the planets travel in their paths round the sun. Bradley, sitting in a boat on the Thames, and observing how the vane on the top of the mast gives a different apparent direction to the wind, as the boat sails one way or the other, strikes upon a line of thought which leads to the discovery of the aberration of light.

I recall these well-known stories to your remembrance in order to familiarize your minds with the obvious distinction between the invisible law or fact, and its visible manifestation and embodiment. Here, as elsewhere, the kingdom of nature runs parallel with the Kingdom of Heaven ; and we may use, as Jesus Himself has taught us to use, the mysteries of the one to help us to grasp and comprehend the mysteries of the other.

Thus prepared, let us mark attentively what follows in the Gospel narrative. He is alone, apparently, with His disciples ; *His* mind and *theirs* alike full of the subject which had been suggested by the Pharisees' question. He can speak to the disciples as He could not speak to the Pharisees. To the Pharisees, to whom everything that did not come *with* observation was as nothing, He can only speak of the silent, secret, invisible working of the Kingdom of God. Signs and portents were what *they* craved : and to give them what they craved was to destroy all hope of a better state of things for them. They must learn to look *within*, first of all ; to trace the hidden root and life within ; before they could look *without*, to the outward

manifestation, with any result but utter confusion, misunderstanding, and mischief to their souls. To *them* it can only be said : 'The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation : neither shall they say, Lo here ! or lo there ! for, behold, the Kingdom of God is within you.'

But to the disciples more than this can be said. What is it ? 'The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and ye shall not see it. And they shall say to you, See here ; or, see there : go not after them, nor follow them. For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven ; so shall also the Son of Man be in his day. But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation.'

I do not know how it may be with most of you ; but it is at any rate quite conceivable that some of you might understand the words, 'The days will come when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man and ye shall not see it,' as meaning that the time would come when they would look back longingly upon the days of close companionship with Himself, and would yearn for the renewal of that companionship, were it but for a single day or even for a single hour. Unquestionably, such a time did come ; and such longings and yearnings must have been theirs. But it is not of this that He is speaking here. The days of which He says, 'Ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man,' are in the future, not in the past. The language of the twenty-second verse must be interpreted by the language of the subsequent verses ; by this, for example : 'So shall also the Son of Man be in his day ;' 'As it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man ;' 'Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed ;' 'When the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth ?'

The Kingdom of God, then, is still uppermost in His thoughts ; and He is looking forward to certain times and seasons of its special manifestation. Such times and seasons there were under the Old Dispensation. Prophets were taught to speak of them

as 'days of the Lord.' These 'days of the Lord' are to the Old Dispensation what the 'days of the Son of Man' are to the New. Here, as everywhere, there is correspondence—analogy—between the Old and the New. But the New is wider, deeper, more complex, more spiritual, more satisfying than the Old. To the prophet Joel, for example, a plague of locusts is a day of the Lord. But no mere outward calamity or external judgment, however tremendous, can by itself, and apart from deeper and more spiritual movements, be described as a 'Day of the Son of Man.' The destruction of Jerusalem, for example, by the Roman armies under Titus was not of itself a day of the Son of Man. It was merely an outward and visible sign of a deep spiritual disturbance, which constituted in very truth a day, a most remarkable day, of the Son of Man.

All this will become clearer to us, as we proceed with our investigation of the subject now before us. The next step in that investigation is to note the signs which He Himself announces as characteristic of those Days. These signs are, briefly, three: universality, suddenness, discrimination.

Even the disciples, and they even at the close of their three years' companionship with Jesus, had not emancipated themselves from the notions and prejudices of their own age and generation. Like the Pharisees, they needed to be cautioned against the 'here' and 'there.' 'They shall say to you, See here; or, see there; go not after them, nor follow them.' Like the Pharisees too, when Jesus has said all, they are still ready with the question, 'Where, Lord?' To which the answer is, 'Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.'

A few weeks, or, it may have been, only a few days later, they are still ready with the same, or a very similar, question: so difficult was it to disabuse their minds of it. On the Mount of Olives, only two days before the Crucifixion, they asked again, 'Master, but when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?' To

which the answer is : 'Take heed lest any man deceive you ; for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ ; and shall deceive many.' . . . 'Then if any man shall say to you, Lo, here is Christ ; or, lo, he is there ; believe him not. For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall show signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect. But take ye heed ; behold, I have foretold you all things.' The warning was not in vain. The cry, 'Christ is here,' 'Christ is there,' was raised, we know, once and again in that stormy and perilous period which preceded the destruction of Jerusalem and the final dispersion of the Jewish nation. The Christian Church, forewarned by its Master, was forearmed against the danger. The cry, 'He is there, he is here,' was branded at once as a false cry. Not *so* must it be, they said, but *thus* :—'As the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven ; so shall also the Son of Man be in his day.'

The subject with which we are endeavouring to grapple is one of amazing and confessed difficulty. I hardly know how to present it with sufficient clearness to you. But its difficulty is at least equalled by its importance. The season of Advent, too, almost compels our thoughts in this direction. We must not rest satisfied until we have, in some measure at least, mastered it.

Our Lord Jesus Christ strove to assist the understandings of His disciples by illustrations and examples, fetched partly from the great book of Nature, partly from the familiar pages of the Scriptures of the Old Testament : the lightning, which shivers in one instant over the whole sky ; the vultures, who sniff the carcase, wherever it is, and flock to devour it ; the deluge ; the doom of Sodom ; the fate of Lot's wife. But we must beware of pressing the illustrations beyond the exact point which they were intended to illustrate. Nearest to His thoughts, doubtless, at the moment in speaking, and nearest also to the thoughts of His disciples in listening and recording, stood that

*then-nearest* Day of the Son of Man, when, to use the language of one of the inspired writers, not 'earth' only, but 'heaven' itself was 'shaken': old beliefs, both Pagan and Jewish, tottering to their fall, and a new faith and a new church rising upon their ruins. But behind this nearest Day of the Son of Man there rose, in long and almost endless vista before his eyes, yet other days of his, fore-shortened as it were, receding into the far-off distance, until the last of all is reached,—the crowning day of restitution and regeneration, when the work of the Judge and the Saviour shall be complete, and when *that* shall come to pass, which St. Paul describes thus, 'When all things shall be subjected unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.' This fulness and complication of the vision help to enhance its difficulty. Yet still there are certain features common to all the days of the Son of Man alike; and these are what I have already enumerated as universality, suddenness, discrimination; or, breadth, surprise, search. The particular illustrations employed by our Lord are intended to bring these characteristic marks of the Days of the Son of Man distinctly into view, and must not be pressed, I think, beyond this their obvious intention. Thus the fate of Lot's wife is used to illustrate the searching discrimination of the days of the Son of Man. Even in the one family, saved out of the general ruin, a distinction is made. One is taken, and the rest are left. So, also, the lightning flashing in a moment from one side of the sky to the other, and the vultures flocking to their prey wherever it is to be found, represent the breadth or universality of the days of the Son of Man; just as the history of the deluge and the doom of Sodom represent their suddenness or their surprise.

Such, then, marked by such characteristics as these, are the days of the Son of Man: and of such days the first and earliest is that which has the fall of Jerusalem for its visible centre and most conspicuous point. Now what Jesus said to His disciples was this: 'The days will come when ye shall desire to see one



of the days of the Son of Man, and ye shall not see it.' And these words strike the keynote of the parable of the unjust judge and the importunate widow, which stands at the commencement of the eighteenth chapter, and which leads direct to the question of our text: 'Nevertheless when the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?' In those evil days of trial and persecution, which came in such quick succession upon the infant Church, and of which Jewish hatred was almost always the moving spring, how was it possible not to desire to see one of those days of the Son of Man, which would put the crooked straight, and make the rough places plain? Year after year went by, and still the Day came not. Of those to whom Jesus spoke, scarce one, or at the most two, survived to see it. They could only pray and long for a redemption, which *their* eyes were never destined to see. But it came at last. The vengeance that overtook the Jew was the deliverance of the Christian Church. The nation that had fallen under the ban of the Roman Empire and had been crushed beneath its heel, was thenceforth powerless either to persecute the Church itself, or to fan the flame of Roman persecution against her. For a time at least, until that great struggle arose which ended in the establishment of Christianity as the religion of the Roman empire, there was comparative peace for the Christian Church.

Put yourselves for a moment at the point of view of a Christian,—say, of St. John, or of the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews,—living through those eventful years which preceded and which followed the destruction of Jerusalem, and studying the signs of the times by the light of such words of his Master as these. What a solemn awe would fall upon his soul, as the handwriting upon the wall flashed into meaning, letter by letter and word by word, in the events of the day! How could he express that awe better than in language like this,—'Whose voice then,' in those old wilderness days, 'shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this, Yet

once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear : for our God is a consuming fire.'

From that day to this is a long time ; a matter of eighteen centuries : and think what is implied in that ! And, doubtless, in that long interval there have been Days of the Son of Man, whose features, even in the dim light of history, it is not impossible to trace. And now, once more, in these strange years in which our own lot is cast, we seem to be able to note again the characteristic marks of a Day of the Son of Man. What a shaking of the earth there has been and still is ! What a fall and rising again of empires and republics ! What a resurrection of dying and dead nationalities ! What wars and rumours of wars ! What anguish and suffering and tribulation untold ! Think of Paris, for example, that queenly city, twice besieged ; once, until, as for Jerusalem of old, there was no bread for the people, and famine did its work ; once, to see her streets red with the blood of her own sons and daughters, slain in fratricidal strife. And if earth has been shaken, so has the heaven ; the firmament of received opinions, of traditional beliefs, of the fundamental axioms of thought and faith. It is a truism and a platitude now-a-days to say, that everything, however old and sacred, is challenged ; has to stand upon the defensive ; has to prove its title-deeds and credentials ; has to show why it is, and why it is what it is. And this shaking of the heaven has all the characteristic marks of breadth and unexpectedness and discrimination. People say in surprise, 'It is 'in the air.' The very children babble of it. It haunts poor people on sick beds, as well as the thoughtful and educated in their studies. And though the preparations of it have of course been slow and gradual, yet it has unquestionably come with a certain suddenness and surprise at last.

Things are said ; books are written ; articles appear in newspapers and magazines, and are calmly discussed, which would have been thought positively outrageous and beyond discussion a very short time ago. And the result is, to the last degree, searching and discriminating for the individual conscience and soul. It is as though Christ was putting to each one of us the question of our text, 'Nevertheless when the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?'

To see it in this light ; to believe, that we are actually living in one of the days of the Son of Man, and that He Himself is putting this searching question to us ; this will of itself go a long way towards arming us against the special perils of a time so perilous. It becomes at once matter of the utmost seriousness to us. The levity and flippancy and frivolity which are such a snare to us, give place to the earnestness and thoughtfulness and sobriety of mind, which are our best intellectual safeguards. We cannot, we dare not, trifle with Him, of whom it is said ; 'The Word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and discerning the thoughts and intents of the heart.'

The kingdom of which the Apostle writes, 'We receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken,' is that Kingdom of God, of which Jesus says, 'The kingdom of God is within you.' Come what may, God's kingdom ours abideth. Look within, brethren, and you will find it there. Every whisper of conscience ; every struggle of the spirit against the flesh ; every pang of remorse ; every sigh of penitent grief ; every upward aspiration ; every breathing after God ; every spark of love, and trust, and hope : all these, and much else, of which we all must be conscious, are witnesses to the Kingdom of God within us. For the saying of the great Lawgiver of Israel, countersigned as it is by the great Apostle of the Gentiles, is still and everlastingly true : 'The Word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it : '—or, in the words of Jesus, 'The Kingdom of God is within you.'

## SERMON II.

### REASON AND REVELATION.

ISAIAH i. 18.

Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord.

OUR First Lessons for eight Sundays consecutively, beginning to-day, are taken from the Book which bears the name of Isaiah. No Book of the Old Testament has left so deep an impression of itself upon the pages of the New. No Book of the Bible, in these modern days, has passed through so fierce a fire of criticism. But the criticism in this, as in so many other cases, has only raised questions without settling them. Even such a comparatively small matter as the arrangement of the earlier chapters of the Book in the order in which they may be supposed to have been written, remains still debateable ground, after all that has been said about it. For in truth, from the very nature of the case, in these matters which involve the reconstruction of the past by ingenious combinations of existing and identical materials, the last word is never spoken. The symmetry, which seems to be the result of each fresh speculation in its turn, is like the symmetry of the kaleidoscope; due not to real structural combination and strength, but to a mere juxtaposition of materials owing all their seeming harmony to the mirror which reflects and repeats them.

Into no such barren fields of inquiry do I propose to lead

your thoughts, brethren, this evening. Our subject to-night stands quite apart from all those intricate questions of authorship and date, to which this Book, which bears Isaiah's name, has given rise. We only assume, what none will deny, that the words of our text and its context were written by the Isaiah, whose grand personality stands out conspicuous in the gloom of the declining years of the Hebrew monarchy.

I remember very well, as if it were but yesterday, though it is now some five-and-twenty years ago, being present at a discussion in a little Secularist or Infidel Hall in the East of London, when the controversy turned for the moment upon this very passage. The Lecturer of the evening had had the audacity to attack the Bible on the score of its morality. He had quoted the words, 'Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord : though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow ; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.' He had argued, that by such language a dangerous facility was given to sin ; that, if its effects and consequences could be so easily removed, there was less need for striving against the temptations to it. In the course of the discussion, there rose on the other side one, who was to all appearance a common working man, not well educated, but evidently thoughtful, clear-headed, and in earnest. He quietly and very effectively called attention to the context of the passage, the two verses which precede our text. 'Wash you, make you clean ; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes ; cease to do evil ; learn to do well ; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.' This, he urged, is the true and necessary prelude to what follows : 'Come now,' come *when this is done*, 'and let us reason together, saith the Lord : though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow ; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.' The passage, he argued, rightly understood, teaches, *not* that sin is a light matter, easily condoned ; *but* that only through true repentance, and through reformation,

is there a way to forgiveness and absolution. So far from facilitating sin, it opposes to it the thorny and terrible obstacle of the necessity of retracing, in tears and shame and pain, the devious path, and recovering, at bitter cost, the true, but lost, direction.

The argument was sound in substance, though wrong in form. That the doctrine of the Bible, with reference to sin and repentance and forgiveness, is what the speaker represented it to be, no candid and ingenuous mind could for one moment doubt. But the word 'now' of our text,—'Come *now*,'—was being pressed into a service for which Isaiah never intended it. It is not the '*now*' of time. It is in the original only a word, closely connected with the preceding word (to which indeed it is actually joined in the Hebrew by a hyphen), and *emphasizing* it. We could express it in English by merely laying a stress upon the word 'Come : ' 'Come, and let us reason together, saith the Lord.' The language of the text thus becomes the language of earnest invitation, of tender entreaty. 'Come, I beseech you, and let us reason,' or confer, 'together, saith the Eternal.' The invitation of the text receives thus a special meaning and force ; may be detached from its context, and treated as applying far more widely than its immediate use might suggest. The immediate use is, as you see, in connection with the thought of *sin* and the *forgiveness* of sin. But that little word '*now*,' so far from binding the invitation to the context, actually detaches it from the context, and sets us free to expound and apply it in an endless variety of ways. A few of the thoughts thus suggested I propose to lay before you this evening. They will be found, I trust, suitable and helpful on a Sunday like this, when we once more commence the round of our ecclesiastical year with the solemn season of Advent.

1. The Divine invitation, then, is, 'Come, and let us reason together.' We may say, with the most absolute truth, that this invitation holds good always and everywhere. We may say also, that almost every good thing is included in it ; that it contains

the germ of all that is excellent and admirable in human nature ; that, if we would but hearken to it, it would speedily put us in the way of all perfection. To listen to God's voice, and suffer Him to reason with us, to plead with us, to reprove and convince us ; is not this the one thing needful for us all ? Is not this what Jesus meant, when, after quoting Isaiah's words, 'They shall be *all* taught of God,' he added, 'Every man therefore that hath listened, and learned of the Father, cometh unto me ?' Was not this as much as to say, 'There is a Divine Teacher ever present with you all, ever saying to each, "Come, and let us reason together." Listen to that voice, pay attention to it, learn from it : it is the *Father's* voice ; and it is drawing you to *me* ?' And is not this, again, what the last of the prophets, John the Seer, intended, when, as the spokesman of the Son of Man, he wrote thus : 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock : if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me ?' Here, too, does not the whole thing turn upon the listening to a Divine voice, which is ever seeking to gain the ear of the soul ? What are these, then, but Christian versions of the invitation, uttered of old in God's name by the greatest of the prophets of Israel, 'Come, and let us reason together, saith the Eternal' ? And do not these Christian versions fully justify us in asserting that this invitation holds good always and everywhere, is addressed to every soul of man at every moment, though there be times and seasons in *every* life, when it utters itself with extraordinary force, pertinacity, perspicuity ; will take no denial, but must have an answer ?

It will be admitted by all, that the first requisite of all moral improvement is, that there should be thoughtfulness, seriousness, attention to our conduct. We often hear the excuse, 'I did not give it a thought ;' to which the only reply can be, 'But you *ought* to have given it.' Self-recollection and self-collection are essential to sound speech, true thought, wise action. And what are these again but a partial human answer to the Divine

invitation, 'Come, and let us reason together.' It would make that answer far less partial, much more complete, if, when we enter into the innermost chamber of the soul to reflect and collect ourselves, we would remember *who* meets us there, and *whose* shrine that chamber is. It is the Eternal Himself who meets us there. The Apostle's words are true: 'Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own.'

It is very hard indeed to *remember* this; or to *realise* it, when remembered. The action of conscience seems to each one of us such a simple, commonplace, every-day affair, that the high thoughts, suggested by our text in connection with it and by way of explanation of it, appear beside the mark altogether. Neither is this the time to debate the question further, or to show how fully the facts of what we call 'Conscience' seem to be met and satisfied by our regarding it as that organ of the soul, both ear and eye, by which we listen to a *voice*, which is no mere echo of our own thoughts, but is a truly Divine voice; and by which we apprehend a *light*, which is no mere light of reason, but is from that true supernatural light that 'lighteth every man that cometh into the world.' We pass, then, from these thoughts, to give another turn to the invitation of our text; another turn of which it is obviously and at once susceptible.

2. The invitation is, 'Let us reason together.' Bishop Butler, discussing the important distinction between objections against the evidence of Christianity and objections against Christianity itself, writes in his wise and guarded way: 'I express myself with caution, lest I should be mistaken to vilify reason; which is indeed the only faculty we have wherewith to judge concerning anything, even revelation itself.' In these days we are often inclined to be afraid of exercising our reason on any matter which trenches in any degree upon the field of revelation. We contrast reason and faith with one another, and assign faith to the domain of revelation, yielding to reason the supremacy over everything outside that domain. Couched in a very different



spirit is the language which I have just quoted ; in which reason is described as 'the only faculty we have wherewith to judge concerning anything, even revelation itself.' We should do well to correct and invigorate our own timid ways of thinking and speaking on this subject by such language as this. And yet of this language, too, we seem to need a corrective. It sounds too trenchant and unqualified. And the corrective which we need will be found, I believe, in the invitation of our text, 'Come, and let us reason together, saith the Eternal.'

We are called by God to the full and free exercise of all our faculties, reason included. The touch of the Spirit of God summons the whole man into harmonious and balanced activity. Not to crush or to bow or to terrify, but to raise and encourage and educate, is,—judging from what we read in the Holy Scriptures—the Divine purpose in reference to man. Ezekiel, when 'the heavens were opened' to him, and he 'saw visions of God,' and 'heard a voice of one that spake,' fell upon his face, as though in a swoon of fear. But the first words that the voice addressed to him were these, 'Son of Man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee.' Whereupon, he writes, 'The spirit entered into me, and set me upon my feet, that I heard him that spake unto me.' John the Divine, when he beheld the vision of the Son of Man in His glory, 'fell at his feet as dead.' Whereupon, he writes, 'He laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not.' Examples of a similar method of dealing with the souls of men abound on every side in the pages of our Bible. *Not* bondage, *but* freedom ; *not* terror, *but* trust and love ; *such* is the evident aim and intention of the dealings of God with men, through the long ages about which the Bible informs us. The crowning, final revelation of the *Father*, in the *Son*, makes this intention or aim so plain and palpable that it can almost be seen and handled and felt. For the children of the kingdom, doubt is, on this point, impossible.

Let us reason, then, by all means, on the ways of God. We all know Milton's famous lines—

‘In discourse more sweet,—  
 For eloquence the soul, song charms the sense,—  
 Others apart sat, on a hill retired,  
 In thoughts more elevate, and reason’d high  
 Of Providence, foreknowledge, will, and fate;  
 Fix’d fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute;  
 And found no end, in wandering mazes lost.’

We know, too, whom he is describing. We must all have been conscious of a kind of painful sense of incongruity between *such* occupation and the scene in which it is located. The poet’s only excuse for such incongruity would be this; that the reasoning which he describes was reasoning audacious, defiant, self-centred; the very reverse of that reasoning to which the prophet invites in our text, ‘Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Eternal.’ That one word, ‘*together*,’ he might urge, makes all the difference.

And this is true; and to this I would earnestly ask your attention. It is not merely, ‘Let us *reason*,’ but, ‘Let us reason *together*.’ Our reasonings on revelation, and on all the high and mysterious subjects associated with it, must proceed in the full recognition of what is implied in this ‘*together*.’ We may reason, if we are minded to do so, upon the Trinity, upon the Incarnation, upon the Atonement, upon Final Judgment, upon the Restitution of all things; upon any subject, however lofty and transcendent; provided only our reasonings ever be ‘*together*,’—that is, *with God*,—as those, to whom God is speaking, and with whom God is reasoning; and who are therefore constrained to reason back,—if I may be allowed the expression,—in all childlike humility and simplicity, reverence and awe;—not as though *we* were the measure of all things, as the old Sophists maintained that man was,—but in the full recognition of the limitation of our faculties and the poverty of our intellectual resources, and at the same time in the full belief of St. Paul’s words: ‘*Now* we see through a glass, darkly; but *then*, face to face; *now* I know in part, but *then* shall I know, even as also I

am known.' It has been well said by a great thinker of this century, adopting the language of one of the greatest of the fathers of the Christian Church: 'The foundation of our philosophy is humility.' The moment we strive to answer to the invitation, 'Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord,' we shall find that it must be so. No other attitude of the mind is possible for us.

3. It may be said, perhaps, that this is only an ingenious adaptation of the words of our text. Well then, let us return, in conclusion, to the actual context, and draw our last applications thence.

Isaiah's work had to be done in an age of religious formalism and hypocrisy. 'To what purpose,' so he is instructed to speak or write, at the very commencement of this book of his, 'To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them.' Upon which words follows the terrible climax of the whole indictment: 'And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear; your hands are full of blood.'

By contrast with this hollow and purely ceremonial religionism, Isaiah is instructed to plead for a true, sincere, spiritual religion,—a religion which joins to the soul of devotion a body or framework of just and pure and righteous action. 'Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for

the widow :’ words which St. James evidently had in his mind, when he wrote, ‘Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father, is this : To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.’ Then follows the invitation of our text, ‘Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord.’ And then, last of all, the words of promise ; such words as have well and justly earned for Isaiah the title of the Evangelical Prophet : ‘Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow ; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.’

It ought to be quite unnecessary to warn any of *us* against such a hollow, counterfeit religion as the prophet Isaiah is commissioned to denounce in this passage. If we will but accept the invitation, ‘Come, and let us reason together, saith the Lord,’ we shall soon be convinced, if we need to be convinced, of the utter futility and worthlessness of such a religion. Not to this denunciation, then, of false religion, but to the Evangelical promise which is so closely associated with our text, let me, for one minute or two longer, ask your attention, before we part.

We make, as it were, a fresh start to-day,—outwardly, as a matter of Church Order. We turn back over the pages of our Prayer-book, from the last of the Sundays after Trinity to the first of the Sundays in Advent. Are such fresh starts possible, inwardly and spiritually, as well as outwardly and visibly ? The prophet Isaiah seems to tell us, in God’s name, that they *are*. ‘Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow,’—words with which we may compare these, from the same book : ‘I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions ; and, as a cloud thy sins ; return unto me, for I have redeemed thee.’

This is one out of many aspects of that hopefulness of the prophetic teaching which is so remarkable and noteworthy. No one need despair of himself. No one need say, ‘My sins are so heinous, my faults so deep in grain, that nothing can save,

nothing restore me. I have nothing to do but to fold my arms in despair, and sink beneath the drowning waters.' Not so, my brother, my sister. There is a root of vigorous life within thee, in spite of all the sins and faults that seem to choke its growth. It is what St. Paul describes as, 'Christ in you, the hope of glory.' Be patient with thyself; be in earnest; watch and pray: and the death within shall yet be swallowed up of life.

Do not let us leave this Church to-night with merely a vague feeling of hope and delight in the prospect of possibilities of redemption within our reach. What we have to do is to turn the possible into the actual; and this can only be by patient effort, by watchfulness and prayer. For instance, you and I have such and such besetting sins to contend against; such and such besetting characteristics to guard against. Well, then, let us go home to-night, steadfastly resolved to wage war against these besetting sins and characteristics more vigorously and earnestly than we have yet done. To the young I may be allowed to say;—Use this Advent season to combat some one particular fault or failing: attack your spiritual enemies in detail: concentrate your whole attention upon some one of them at present: conquer that one; and the rest will be easier to conquer afterwards.

We will not then despair of ourselves. No, nor will we despair even of the worst and least hopeful of the human beings around us. Some of the saddest experiences of human nature are made within the walls of a workhouse. Yet even there Christian effort will not seldom meet a response,—a response sufficient to justify our faith in the capability of redemption, which ever inheres in human nature, even at its weakest and its worst. Such Christian effort in our Leicester workhouse you are asked to aid with your contributions to-night. I can speak from personal experience, years ago, of the necessity of the work, and of its grateful reception by the inmates of the workhouse. If, in the interest of society at

large, it is found necessary to erect such buildings, and to fill them with those whom misfortune or folly or sin has reduced to utter poverty and helplessness ; the least we can do, as Churchmen and Christians, is to take care that the ministrations of the Gospel shall be placed within their reach. Their lot is hard enough at the best ; and not less hard, because often the result of their own folly or misconduct. Let us, at any rate, take care that words of blessed hope shall reach their ears ; these, for example : ‘ Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow ; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.’

And now once more, ere we part, let me earnestly press upon you the gracious invitation of the text, ‘ Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord ;’ ‘ *reason together*,’ before slumber seals our eyes to-night ; reason with God, and suffer God to reason with us : ‘ *reason together*’ over the past and the future,—*the past*, with its crimson dye of sin and failure ; *the future*, with its possibilities, which *may*, if we are resolved they *shall*, become realities, of spiritual redemption, healing, and triumph. Strange, dark, unknown future that lies before us ! Here is a prayer for us, that may help us to face it aright :—

‘ I do not ask, O Lord, that life may be  
    A pleasant road :  
I do not ask that Thou wouldst take from me  
    Aught of its load :  
I do not ask that flowers should always spring  
    Beneath my feet :  
I know too well the poison and the sting  
    Of things too sweet.  
For one thing only, Lord, dear Lord, I plead ;  
    *Lead me aright*,—  
Though strength should falter, and though heart should bleed,—  
    Through Peace to Light.’

## SERMON III.

### IS THE BIBLE TRUE?

JOHN v. 39, 40.

Search the Scriptures ; for in them ye think ye have eternal life : and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.

A FEW weeks ago there appeared on our walls the announcement of a lecture, to be given at the Temperance Hall, with this heading, 'Is the Bible true?' I am not going to say a single word about the lecturer or his lecture. This is not the place, and this is not the time, to do so ; I take nothing but the *title* of his lecture, which thousands besides myself must have read and pondered. I propose to examine it, and to consider what kind of answer we, as honest and earnest inquirers, are bound to give to it.

'Is the Bible true?' So runs the question, which is to be the subject of our inquiry this afternoon. Writers on Logic, from Aristotle downwards, have been in the habit of enumerating amongst what they call 'Material Fallacies,' (that is, fallacies which lie in the *matter* and not in the *form*, and which can only be unmasked and exposed through a knowledge of the subject,) one to which they have given the name of the 'Fallacy of many Questions,'—a fallacy which is committed whenever we 'so combine two or three questions into one that no true answer can be given to them.'

There is little or nothing to be added to what Aristotle wrote, more than 2000 years ago, as to the mode of treating such fallacies. 'Several questions put as one should be at once decomposed into their several parts. Only a single question admits of a single answer ; so that neither several predicates of one subject, nor one predicate of several subjects, but only one predicate of one subject, ought to be affirmed or denied in a single answer.'

The question, 'Is the Bible true?' is a striking and flagrant example of this 'fallacy of many questions ;' and we must follow Aristotle's advice in dealing with it. 'What is the Bible?' Its very name tells us that it is 'The Books ;' *not* 'The Book,' *but* 'The Books ;' *not* singular, *but* plural ; *not* a single work, *but* a literature, a library ; the composition, *not* of a single author, nor of a single generation, nor even of a single century ; *but* of many authors, many generations, many centuries. And if the authors are many—and if the centuries during which the volume grew gradually, first into existence, and then into its present form, are many—so, also, many and manifold are its contents. It includes history,—for example, the books of Samuel and the Kings ; poetry,—for example, the Psalms ; philosophy,—for example, Ecclesiastes ; allegory, parable, drama, prophetic utterances, discourses on Morality and Religion, epistles to churches and to friends ; and running through all these, as a golden thread linking all into one, *witness, testimony*, a thousand times repeated in a thousand forms, to the Kingdom and the Righteousness of God.

Thus it appears that, in the question, 'Is the Bible true?' the one subject, 'The Bible,' includes really *many* subjects ; so that many questions are really being asked in one. Not only so ; were we to be misled into answering the question as though it were only *one*, with a simple 'yes' or 'no,' we should not only be affirming or denying one predicate of several subjects, but we should actually be affirming or denying several predicates of several subjects, in defiance of all logic, in one and the same



breath. We cannot predicate of a book of poetry, or of a book of philosophy, that it is '*true*,' in the same sense in which we can predicate of a book of history, that it is true. The same word '*true*' will mean in each case a different thing. It will mean agreeable to fact, agreeable to reason, agreeable to human nature. Nothing but confusion, every moment worse confounded, can result from asking the question, 'Is the Bible true?' To a question so vague and fallacious we can only reply, 'Yes, *or* no; Yes, *and* no,' according to the particular subject selected out of the mass of subjects which are included in the one word '*Bible*;' and according to the particular meaning that is to be assigned, out of many possible meanings, to the one word '*true*.'

But I have no intention of leaving the matter thus. The *form*, in which the subject is presented to us in the question, may be hopelessly blundering and confused; but it may indicate a vein of thought which it may be very necessary for us to explore to the end. Exploring it thus, we may be enabled to reach and expose a fallacy which lies at the root of much of our modern infidelity, or of scepticism bordering on infidelity; and which lies also at the root of a certain mental uneasiness and timidity in Christian people, wholly unworthy of the faith which they profess.

In entering upon this branch of our subject, I would beg you, first of all, to weigh well the words of our text. The words purport to be spoken by our Lord Jesus Christ at Jerusalem to the Pharisees and Scribes of his day. I am so anxious, at this point of my argument, to take nothing for granted which even the wildest criticism might deny, that I content myself with saying, '*The words purport to be spoken.*' At any rate we find them in a Christian document, which belongs at the latest to the second century; and which the common belief of Christendom attributes to the pen of the Apostle John. The words, if they are nothing else, are the expression of very early Christian thought.

The words, then, purport to be addressed to those who were firm believers in the infallibility of the Bible of their own day, *i. e.* the Scriptures of the Old Testament. 'In them *ye* think' (there is an emphasis on the word '*ye*,') '*ye* have eternal life.' There is no question between the speaker and the hearers as to the value and authority of the Scriptures, viewed generally and in the abstract. But the grounds and reasons of that value and of that authority are different, in the view of the hearers and in the view of the speaker. In the view of the hearers, the Scriptures contained eternal life. In the view of the speaker, they testified or bore witness to One, to whom His hearers must come, if they would have life. 'Search the Scriptures; for in them *ye* think *ye* have eternal life: and they *are* they which testify of me. And *ye* will not come to me, that *ye* might have life.'

We know from a variety of sources, that the Scribes and Pharisees of our Lord's time professed and felt the most unbounded veneration for the letter of the Bible. And yet they refused utterly to become the disciples of Jesus. They hated Him, resisted Him, and at last crucified Him. They worshipped the letter of the Bible, and pronounced it absolutely infallible. But they did not search it, nor use it, for the purpose for which it was given; namely, as a *witness*; a witness to *God*, to His Kingdom, His righteousness, His will. Had they done so, the reflection of the Divine Image and Character in Jesus would at once have attracted them to Him, and they would have found all that they wanted there. Such is the view of Jesus; or, if we must speak from the platform of extreme scepticism—as for my present argument it suffices to do—such is the view of the nameless Christian author of the fourth Gospel.

It appears, then, that, in the view of this Christian writer (we will still take the lowest ground), to believe in the infallibility of the Bible, and to come to Christ for life, are two entirely distinct and separable things; to this extent, at least, that it is

quite possible to do the *first*, without doing the *second*, which is the really vital and essential thing to do.

It does not follow from this, however, that the second of the two is so separable from the first, as to be quite independent of the first ; in such sense and to such extent, that a man might come to Christ for life, and yet hold no opinion whatever about the infallibility of the Bible or even be a disbeliever in its infallibility, judging it, like any other book, on its merits, by its results. This, I say, does not follow from what has been already urged ; and the proof of it, if it is to be proved, must be looked for elsewhere.

We have not far to look, however. The position, that the Gospel of Christ stands absolutely uncommitted to the exact veracity of any written document whatever, is the position taken up by St. Paul in letters whose genuineness is beyond dispute. In his view, it is the glory of the New Covenant, that, unlike its predecessor, it is a covenant, '*not of the letter, but of the Spirit*'; more exactly, '*not of writ, or 'writing,' 'but of spirit.*' Let me commend to your special attention in this connection that famous passage of his First Epistle to the Corinthians, in which he describes the method which he had pursued in his first preaching of the Gospel at Corinth, and the success which had attended it. The passage to which I refer is the second chapter of that First Epistle to the Corinthians ; particularly the first ten verses of the chapter, beginning thus : 'And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God ; for I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him Crucified ;' and ending thus : 'But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit : for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.'

But, in truth, this point needs no proof. It stands to reason, that multitudes, in St. Paul's day and afterwards, came straight from heathenism into the Christian fold without ever passing through the gateway of Judaism ; and, therefore, without ever

imbibing any definite belief as to the special character of the Jewish Scriptures. Unquestionably, St. Paul would have resisted any endeavour to impose such a belief upon his converts, as strenuously as he resisted the endeavour to impose circumcision upon them. To him, and eventually to all his brother-apostles also, it was perfectly clear that all the essentials of the Christian faith and life are comprised in such simple statements as these: 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved:' 'Ye will not *come to me*, that ye might have life.'

Christianity, then, in the view of its earliest and most faithful apostles and interpreters, stands absolutely uncommitted to any theory whatever as to the nature of the Bible; leaves us to find out, by actual trial, what its nature is; and whether it be, in every line and syllable and upon every subject, infallible or not. Merely to believe in its infallibility, or to think that we have eternal life in it, will not bring us to Christ. And, conversely, to believe it to be in some respects fallible; to believe that we have eternal life, *not* in it, *but* in Christ, will not prevent us from coming to Christ and so finding life, where alone life is to be found.

And now, having taken, so far, the lowest ground, which even the most remorseless criticism cannot deny me, and having proved all that I care to prove upon that ground, I feel at liberty to close this branch of my argument by simply stating my confident belief, that our text is a true record of the teaching of Jesus; that He saw, as none but He could see, that the popular veneration for the letter of the Bible, which prevailed in his own day, was actually weaving a blinding veil between the hearts of his hearers and their God; that, with all their veneration for it, they were not really searching it; and that, until they began to search it right heartily and lovingly, it could never yield up its treasures to them, nor help them to that knowledge of God in which alone there is life.

So it was with the Jewish Church more than eighteen

centuries ago; and something very like this is the case with a large portion of the Christian Church now. It will scarcely be denied, that, in the popular estimation at the present day, the truth of Christianity is bound up with the infallibility of the Bible. Blows aimed at the infallibility of the Bible are supposed, by friends and foes alike, to be blows aimed at the truth of Christianity. If the Bible can be convicted of some mistake, however trifling, upon any matter either of historical fact or of physical science, forthwith it is believed that Christianity has received its death blow, or at any rate is seriously damaged. Nothing of the kind. You might admit every cavil of the sceptic, and still ask with entire indifference, 'What then?'

This is that fundamental fallacy, against which I specially wish to guard you. Until we have shaken ourselves free from it, we are in danger of falling an easy prey to the Romanist on the one side,—to the infidel on the other. The Romanist says: 'What is the use of your infallible Book, if you have not an infallible interpreter to expound it to you?' The infidel says: 'Your infallible Book is not infallible. I can prove to you that it is not. There is *this* little error *here*; and *that* little discrepancy *there*; and such and such small and trifling inaccuracies on matters of historical fact or of natural science. What then becomes of your Christian Faith, which you tell me rests upon the infallibility of the Bible as its foundation?'

To these attacks, from the one side and the other, it is our privilege (did we but know it and use it), to reply thus: 'The foundation of our faith, as Christians, is *not* an infallible Book, *but* the living Christ Himself. We say, with St. Paul, in every possible sense of the words: "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." We search in vain elsewhere for light and life. What we seek in vain elsewhere, we find in Him. The more closely and earnestly we study the records of his life on earth,—all imperfect, or even false though they may possibly be,—the more does He attract Himself; the more does the glory of his mind and ch

grow upon us, the more we shall be able to  
see and hear of the things of God.  
Go every man to his own place, and  
the words of eternal life shall be  
in your hearts.

And then turning to the Church, we say  
our time has not yet come, a time when we  
We think—we will not say we are  
regarding the Church as a body of  
judgment. We are rather than  
expounder of it, and we are  
as our Teacher. We believe that  
who desire to know the truth  
answers the cry for light will find it in  
We dare not resign ourselves to the  
Church, or to some other body of  
of the conscience. We are not  
that to do so is an act of rebellion  
Master, and Teacher of our souls.

The strength of this position  
be felt, just in proportion as we  
'Search the Scriptures' for their  
have, what St. John calls, the  
unused, dust-laden Bible upon our  
at least the possibility of all  
course, in this matter of testimony  
Testament is vastly more  
Old, and the Gospel narratives  
and decisive of all. Yet every part of  
tributes its quota to swell the  
proportion which helps us to catch that  
new era which is the divine  
as a whole. It is the  
for truth and righteousness,  
disciplining us to the

us, like Mary of old, to 'sit at his feet, and hear his word.' Be this sacred hunger and thirst, and with them this true discipleship, *ours*; and the arguments of the infidel will shake us no more.

I have been exceedingly anxious to use not a single word, nor a single phrase, this afternoon, without a very precise and intelligible meaning. For example, I have used the phrase, 'Coming to Christ.' I have used it, because He uses it Himself, in some of his most touching and characteristic utterances; in the text, for example; and in such passages as the following: 'If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink:' 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.' And this last utterance of his is followed by the invitation: 'Take my yoke upon you, and *learn from me*; and ye shall find rest unto your souls.' I do not for a moment mean to say, that we exhaust all the force of the phrase, 'Coming to Christ,' when we explain it, in the way suggested by Him in these words, as coming to Him, in scholar or disciple fashion, to learn from Him or to be taught by Him. But just as his first followers began by coming to Him in this simple way, as his disciples or scholars, so it must be still with ourselves. All other coming to Him must be founded upon this. We must begin and end by learning from Him, day by day, as diligent scholars; learning from his precepts, his example, his life, his death. Only thus can He ever be to us 'the *Way*, the *Truth*, the *Life*.' Only thus can we ever learn to do justice to the after-history of the Christian Church and the development of Christian doctrine; *justice*, I say, neither unduly overrating their importance, nor unduly disparaging their results. The key of the whole Christian position is, in one word, 'at the feet of Jesus.'

Planting ourselves firmly upon this position, we can discuss calmly, and without either irritation or alarm, all the questions which have been raised in our hearing, these many years, by the application of what is commonly called 'historical criti-

cism,' and of the discoveries of Physical Science, to the Bible. We have no longer any religious interest in their decision, one way or the other. Nothing turns upon them. Now the impression left by such calm discussion of these questions upon my own mind, is simply wonder at the smallness of the result, which the sceptics and critics have to show, for all their laborious investigations, and for all their fierce assaults upon the veracity of the Bible. I should have expected that books written, as the Scriptures were, in an unscientific age for unscientific people, would have been convicted of blunders, gross and puerile, without end. Nothing of the kind, however, is really the case. The Bible, *soundly interpreted*, is very seldom in conflict with the established conclusions of physical science. I am obliged to add the words, 'soundly interpreted;' because no book has suffered, as the Bible has, alike from the ignorance of its admirers, and the malevolence of its enemies. Give to allegory what is allegory,—to poetry what is poetry,—to history what is history,—as truth and honesty compel us to do; and it is surprising to see how small and insignificant is the residuum of error, of misapprehension, of scientific inaccuracy.

A brighter day, I verily believe, is coming for the Christian world; a day when the real relations between the Gospel of Christ, and what is vaguely called 'science,' will be better understood than they are at present, and when there will be less of that fighting in the dark, which now mixes friend and foe together in hopeless confusion. I trace faint streaks of the approaching dawn in two very recent utterances,—of the most remorseless historical criticism on one side, and of the most advanced physical science on another. A brief reference to the two must bring this discourse to a conclusion.

In the last number of the *Contemporary Review*, the author of a well-known work, entitled 'Literature and Dogma,'—a work regarded with intense suspicion and dislike by the Christian world generally as critical, rationalizing, and destructive to the last degree,—thus explains his object in writing



and publishing it. I give you his words without making any remark but this :—If the extremest form of historical criticism can speak thus, surely there must be some mode of reconciliation between it and the Christian Church.

‘Our object’ in writing the work has been ‘to find sure and safe grounds for the continued use and authority of the Bible. We start with admitting that the truth, so far at least as religion is concerned, is to be found in the Bible ; and what we seek is, that the Bible may be used and enjoyed. All disquisitions about the Bible seem to us to be faulty and even ridiculous, which have for their result that the Bible is less felt, followed, and enjoyed after them than it was before them. The Bible is in our hands to be felt, followed, and enjoyed ; this conviction we set out with. Men’s instinct for self-preservation and happiness guided them to the Bible :—now it is of the essence of what gives safety and happiness to exercise influence, to excite emotion and joy. And the Bible has long been enjoyed and enjoyed deeply : its summons to lay hold of eternal life, to seek the kingdom of God, has been a trumpet-call bringing life and joy to thousands. They regarded the Bible as a source of life and joy, and they were right in so regarding it ; we wish them to be able so to regard it still. All that we may say about the Bible we confess to be a failure, if it does not lead people to find the Bible a source of life and joy still.’

We turn from what we may call the final outcome of historical criticism, to what we may call the final outcome of physical science. In his remarkable address at Belfast a few weeks ago Professor Tyndall spoke thus :—‘For science, however, no exclusive claim is here made ; you are not urged to erect it into an idol. The inexorable advance of man’s understanding in the path of knowledge, and those unquenchable claims of his moral and emotional nature which the understanding can never satisfy, are here equally set forth. The world embraces not only a Newton, but a Shakespeare ;

not only a Boyle, but a Raphael; not only a Kant, but a Beethoven; not only a Darwin, but a Carlyle. Not in each of these, but in all, is human nature whole. They are not opposed, but supplementary—not mutually exclusive, but reconcilable. And if, unsatisfied with them all, the human mind, with the yearning of a pilgrim for his distant home, will turn to the mystery from which it has emerged, seeking so to fashion it as to give unity to thought and faith; so long as this is done, not only without intolerance or bigotry of any kind, but with the enlightened recognition that ultimate fixity of conception is here unattainable, and that each succeeding age must be held free to fashion the mystery in accordance with its own needs—then, casting aside all the restrictions of materialism, I would affirm this to be a field for the noblest exercise of what, in contrast with the *knowing* faculties, may be called the *creative* faculties of man.’

The meaning of this language is unmistakable. True, it launches a parting shaft in calling *that* ‘creative’ which we believe to be only ‘*receptive*.’ But its meaning, I repeat, is unmistakable. It amounts to a frank recognition, on behalf of physical science, of a demand on man’s part which *it* cannot satisfy. It says, in effect, to us; ‘Your demand is perfectly legitimate: your thirst for God is a true human thirst. But *we* cannot satisfy, cannot slake it. *You must go elsewhere.*’

And *we* know whither to go. Lord Jesus, Thou hast the words of Eternal Life!

## SERMON IV.

### CHRISTIAN MISSIONS.

ISAIAH. xi. 9, 10.

They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain : for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people ; to it shall the Gentiles seek : and his rest shall be glorious.

THERE is scarcely a child here who will be insensible to the music of the words, which were read in our hearing just now as the First Lesson for this evening's service, and of which my text is the conclusion. As we grow older, we feel that the music of the words is matched by the music of the thoughts of which they are the expression. As we read and ponder, we begin to feel what St. Paul meant, when he wrote as in our Epistle for to-day (with these and other similar words before him) : 'Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we through patience, and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope.' We can understand what St. Peter meant, when he addressed his countrymen at Jerusalem thus : 'Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord ; and he shall send Jesus Christ who before was preached unto you ; whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.'

'The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea ;'—*here*, surely, is a promise of 'restitution of all things ;'—*here*, surely, is 'comfort of the Scriptures,' which cannot but inspire us with boundless 'hope.'

The interest and beauty of the passage do not diminish—are only enhanced—on a closer inspection. A very cursory study of the tenth and eleventh chapters will reveal at once the intimate connection between the two. The tenth chapter is full of the thought of the advancing Assyrian host,—advancing, march by march, upon the Holy City,—advancing, until, as the prophet says : 'He shall shake his hand against the mount of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem.' In the extremity of the peril comes the assurance of deliverance : 'Behold, the Lord, the Lord of hosts, shall lop the bough with terror ; and the high of stature shall be hewn down, and the haughty shall be humbled : and he shall cut down the thickets of the forest with iron ; and Lebanon shall fall by a mighty hand.' So ends the tenth chapter. Then comes the contrast : the vision of the tender shoot out of the stem of Jesse,—so slight and weak, to all appearance, by comparison with the mighty cedars of Lebanon, whose fall and crash have been announced in the preceding verse,—the vision of the reign of One who rules in righteousness and peace,—with whom it is not, as with the cruel world-empire of Assyria, 'Might is right,' *but*, 'Right is might.' 'But ;'—not '*And*,' but '*But* : '—'*But* there shall come forth a tender shoot out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots ; and the spirit of the Eternal shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord ; and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord ; and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears : but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth : and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips

shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the cincture of his reins.'

Thus, *here*,—as so often elsewhere in the writings of the prophets,—out of darkness comes light; and when the case seems desperate, hope begins. But it will be asked, 'And what exactly was Isaiah's hope? Was it a hope for the world, or was it a hope only for Israel? Did it radiate, far and wide, from Zion as its centre; or was it limited to the land of which Jerusalem was the capital?' It is quite true, that the word 'earth' in the ninth verse,—*'The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord,'*—will bear this narrower interpretation; as it will certainly also bear the wider and the widest. Nor can I see any reason for restricting the area of Isaiah's hope. We may be sure that it was as wide and as elevated, as it could possibly be in *his* day and under *his* circumstances. But we are bound to remember, that 'no prophecy of the Scriptures is of any private interpretation.' Prophecy, as prophecy, has an expansive force of its own,—which not even the original speaker, still less any subsequent interpreter, must be allowed to fetter. We may still clothe our own highest hopes for the world in Isaiah's language, and yet perhaps mean much more by it than he meant.

'Vainly they tried the deep to sound,  
Even of their own prophetic thought,  
When of Christ crucified and crown'd  
His spirit in them taught.'

This evening I propose to use the hope expressed by Isaiah, as the starting-point for some remarks which I wish to make upon the subject which is specially brought to our notice to-day; the Foreign and Home Missions of the Church of England.

This whole question of missionary work stands upon a very different footing *now* from what it did even ten years ago. It receives a much more respectful treatment *now* on all hands, than it used to do. People are beginning to see, more and more clearly, what important questions are involved in it;

questions full of importance to the Church at home, as well as to the cause of missionary enterprise abroad. This more respectful treatment of the subject,—this growing sense of its importance,—is due to many causes. To no small extent it is due, I believe, to the singular worth and heroic courage of some of the men who of late years have either laboured in the Mission Field, or at least have steadily kept in view, amidst other labours, the propagation of the Gospel in heathen countries. It must suffice to mention one name now; the name of Dr. Livingstone. Traveller, explorer, and geographer as he was, he never lost sight of the great religious purpose, which drew him in the first instance from his home in Scotland, and made him an earnest preacher of the Gospel to the tribes of Africa. When his body was laid, but the other day, in its grave in Westminster Abbey, the cause of Foreign Missions gained a step, which it never need lose again.

I will mention one other reason for this changed attitude of public opinion towards Christian Missions. That reason is the growing candour and honesty of those who are officially responsible for missionary work, or who have themselves laboured, and are labouring, in the Mission Field. Time was, when a missionary meeting was the derision of worldly men, and even of thoughtful, unworldly men. It was regarded by them as an entertainment suited only for children,—an opportunity for the retailing of silly anecdotes and the utterance of vapid talk. *Now*, we expect to hear from the speakers on a missionary platform a sober exposition of the principles on which missionary labours ought to be conducted,—such an exposition, for example, as some of us heard the other day from Bishop Webb;—or a candid explanation of the difficulties which beset the work, and of the small progress made in it. Of such candid, honest explanation the recent letter of the Bishops of India, addressed to the Bishops of the Church at home, is an admirable model. I know of no document, bearing upon the subject of Foreign Missions, which is better calculated to inspire confidence in the minds of

Churchmen in England ; and *this*, on account of its simple candour, its honest confession of failure, and its intense earnestness. Take these few sentences as a fair specimen of the whole :—‘In India we are dealing with millions, not with thousands, and we should mislead you if we gave you to understand, that any deep, general impression has been produced, or that the conversion of India is as yet imminent. There is nothing which can at all warrant the opinion that the heart of the people has been largely touched, or that the conscience of the people has been affected seriously. There is no advance in the direction of faith in Christ, like that which Pliny describes, or Tertullian proclaims, as characteristic of former eras. In fact, looking at the work of missions on the broadest scale, and especially upon that of our own missions, we must confess that, in many cases, their condition is one rather of stagnation than of advance.’

I think that you will quite go along with me in the recognition of this changed attitude of the public mind towards Christian Missions, and in the appreciation of the causes which have led to it. Not in vain have men like Livingstone, Mackenzie, Patteson, and Goodenough, toiled and died. Not in vain do men like Bishop Callaway, Bishop Webb, and the Bishops of India, speak, it may be out of the very bitterness of their souls, and tell us their difficulties, their failures, their discouragements. Their deeds, their words, their deaths sink deep into English hearts, and awaken a response there, which in no other way could be awakened.

So much as to the respectful treatment now almost universally accorded to the subject of Christian Missions. Let me go on to say a word about the importance of the work, in its bearing upon the Church at home. These men who have toiled and died, year after year, in the Mission Field, have not toiled and died only for themselves or their few converts, but for *us*. *We* enter into their *labours* ; *we* profit by their *deaths*. I have no hesitation in saying that the extraordinary develop-

ment of Church-work and Church-life at home during the last twenty years has been due in great measure to the impulse given through the contagious example of missionaries abroad. How many of us Clergymen, for example, I wonder, have had our hearts stirred within us to greater zeal and nobler efforts through the perusal of the lives of Henry Martyn, of Bishop Mackenzie, of Bishop Patteson ! And what *we* have felt, *you* of the laity have felt also. *You*, too, in the perusal of these and other similar works, have found a call addressed to *you*,—a duty laid upon *you*,—to live no longer to yourselves, but to Him who died and rose again for you.

This, however, is not all. There is even now opening before us, I believe, another direction, in which missionary work abroad,—spite of its want of success, and even by reason of its want of success,—*may* prove, and *will* prove, of the utmost value and benefit to the Church at home. If the Gospel of Christ fails in these last days to produce what we conceive to be its *natural* effect, when preached to the heathen world,—*why*, we are bound to ask, is it so ? Has it lost its vitality ? Is it a thing of the past ? as some would tell us. Shall we content ourselves with laying the blame of failure upon what we call the hardness of the human heart ? Shall we not rather ask ourselves,—very seriously, and with the deepest possible sense of our own responsibility as stewards of the Gospel,—whether the Gospel which we preach is indeed the Gospel which the Apostles of Christ preached, and which wrought such wonders of conversion eighteen centuries ago ;—or whether we have allowed it to get overlaid with accretions of human thought and intellectual system, which, though imposed upon *us* by force of historical development amongst ourselves, are yet no part of the essence of the Gospel of Christ, and ought to be carefully separated from it, when it is being presented for the first time to the heathen world. For example : what have our own Articles of Religion,—what has the Athanasian Creed,—what even has the Nicene Creed,—to do with the Gospel of Christ, when it is a question of



planting the Christian Church in a heathen country? Nothing but a special intellectual training, having at its command a language of special resource, nicety, and flexibility, could make such formulas even intelligible to minds not trained under their influence.

In connection with this point, the letter of the Indian Bishops from which I have already quoted, is full of the most serious warning. 'At the same time,' so they write, 'partly perhaps through the activity of thought which missions have created, the false religions—Mahomedanism, Buddhism, and Hindooism—seem lately to have gained some new religious life and energy, and have in some measure become active once more, and even aggressive; so that among those aboriginal races, numbering several millions, in which missions have hitherto found their most hopeful field, the Church of Christ is confronted by its rivals, and is constrained to ask if they are to snatch out of its hands, through greater zeal and activity, races who are waiting for a religion, and who might be won for Christ.' Shame upon us indeed, and our own fault alone can it be, if the Gospel of Christ should fail to prove itself much more than a match for such rivals!

In British India, more than anywhere else, the Gospel of Christ, as conceived by us English Churchmen and English Christians, is, as it were, on its trial. *There* it is, and only *there*, that it encounters an ancient civilization, philosophic systems of thought, intellects trained in a certain way to think and discuss. It encountered the same kind of thing in its infancy, when it came in conflict with Greek philosophy and Roman civilization. It conquered *then*;—why should it not conquer now? If it fails to do so, the fault, depend upon it, is not in *it*, but in *us*,—in our mode of conceiving and presenting it.

Such thoughts as these are being forced upon us at home by the present aspect and condition of Christian Missions abroad. To explore them,—to find some solution of them,—would be a noble field of labour for devout and philosophic thinkers, both

at home and in the land which suggests them. But, meanwhile, we cannot afford to wait for the completion of such a task. We must work in the Mission Field ourselves, or at least we must advance that work, by such practical means and with the aid of such instrumentalities, as are even now ready to our hand. Doing this, we shall really be doing all that lies in the power of the vast majority of us, towards advancing and stimulating the great theoretical work which needs still to be done.

Here then we strike upon the immediately practical bearing of our subject for this evening. I accept the language of our text as the watchword of all missionary enterprise,—as the expression of a hope, which, though not yet fulfilled and to all appearance a very long way from being fulfilled, shall yet one day be fulfilled, in letter and in spirit, to the utmost bound of meaning which the words can convey: ‘The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea: There shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious.’

St. Paul says: ‘We are labourers together with God.’ *He*, who more than any other man that ever lived, was inspired by the hope expressed by Isaiah, laboured more abundantly than any other man that ever lived to turn that hope into a realized certainty. In proportion as we entertain the same hope, we shall labour diligently for the same result. We shall not fold our hands and say: ‘God will see to it; He has promised, and He will perform: we need not trouble ourselves about it.’ On the contrary, our faith in the promise and the will of God will make us earnest workers with Him in this world-wide extension of the saving knowledge of Himself.

Then the question is,—‘How?’ There comes within these last few weeks, from the authorities of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, an earnest cry for *men*;—not so much for *money*, as for *men*. They tell us, that this time last year, the Society was prepared to support eighteen additional

missionaries for India ; of which *eighteen* only *five* have been forthcoming. They say : ' We have made every effort this year to call forth from our younger brethren offers of personal service in the missionary work of the Church of Christ. We shall not relax our efforts. We ask your co-operation in seeking out suitable men for the Mission Field ; and more especially we entreat a renewal of the fervent and faithful prayers of the whole Church in this behalf.'

I am glad that the old cry for *money* is converted into the loftier, nobler cry for *men*,—for personal service in the Mission Field. And I think it would be well for all of us to take this cry home to ourselves in the first instance, and consider soberly and seriously, in the sight of God, whether there ought to be any response to it on our part. Admitting that, on careful consideration, we do not find that there ought to be such response and offer of personal service,—we shall yet be best enabled in this way to take a true view of our inalienable responsibility as Christians to promote the Gospel of Christ, and enlarge (if we may so say) the kingdom of God. If we find that no obligation lies upon *us* to volunteer for missionary work abroad,—*this* only makes it more incumbent upon us to do all that lies in our power to extend the kingdom of God at home,—in our own hearts,—in the hearts of all around us.

I make no urgent appeal to-night for money. I am not going to degrade a grand subject into a mere pitiful cry for money. You gave what you pleased this morning towards the funds of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel abroad ;—you will give what you please to-night (whether much or little) towards the Workhouse Chaplaincy Fund,—that is, the fund for supplying the ministrations of the Church to the poor inmates, old and young, sick and well, of our workhouse. I wish to keep clear of the money question to-night ; and to occupy your whole thoughts with this matter of *personal service*.

What we all want is,—more of the true missionary spirit. Everything else will follow, in proportion as we acquire this.

Now by this true missionary spirit I understand the impulse to go out of ourselves in order to act for good upon,—in order to influence for good,—those around us ;—and *this*, in a perfectly modest, simple, sympathizing, and unostentatious way. He '*went about doing good*,' is a disciple's account of the great Master,—a missionary's account of the great Missionary of the Father. As such, it cannot be without its meaning and its application to every one of us, his professed followers,—his nominal, if not his real, disciples. Of every one of us it ought to be said,—it ought to be possible to say : 'He,'—'she,'—'*went about doing good*.'

It is the great happiness of the lives of some of us, that our very calling or profession opens out, of itself, boundless opportunities of doing good. To this happy class belong the lives of teachers, (whether in schools or in homes,) of clergymen, of medical men. Shame upon us, that we neglect our opportunities, and make so little use of them ; that we waste opportunities, which are ready to our hand, and which others have to create for themselves in spite of their circumstances,—*not*, as in *our* case, by favour of them ! Let us see to it, that in future we redeem the time, knowing how short it may be.

But whilst some lives have extraordinary facilities for doing good, none are wholly destitute of them ; all may create them in abundance for themselves, if they will do so. All of us come in contact, more or less, with our fellow-creatures. All of us may cherish the recollection of their highest, their eternal, interests ; and may, by speech or by silence, by action or by restraint of action, promote those interests, and thus do something towards the salvation of immortal souls.

I know what will be in the minds of some of us,—and those by no means the worst,—whilst I say what I have just said. 'Who are *we*,' you will reply, 'that we should be able to do good to others ?' Most true : and yet each of us *is* his brother's keeper ; and each of us will have, one day, to answer to the question,—'Where is thy brother ?' We cannot shake off

this burden of human responsibility. We can only take it to the throne of grace, and *there* pray to be taught how to bear it; pray, that we may not, guiltily and perhaps all unconsciously,—through sin or through ignorance or through carelessness,—be a stumbling-block to our brothers; pray, that we may so speak and so act, as to be a help and a guide and a comfort to them; pray, that we may at last, along with them, be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

## SERMON V.

### CHRIST, THE WORD.

JOHN i. 14.

And the Word was made flesh.

I TRIED to show you last night, how the Incarnation of the Son of God is the answer to the prayer, 'Come among us, and with great might succour us;' the answer to the dumb, instinctive cry of humanity, feeling after God, and not finding him; the answer to the conscious yearning of the instructed heart, which, like Moses, pleads, 'Show me thy glory.' To-day we say:

'Wrapp'd in His swaddling bands,  
And in His manger laid,  
The Hope and Glory of all lands,  
Is come to the world's aid;'

and, therefore, to ours.

This is a great mystery. People's minds (I believe) are becoming increasingly alive to the greatness of the mystery, and the demand which it makes upon us for faith and for action. It is no longer accepted as a mere matter of course: men ponder it, wonder over it, hesitate before it. And this is a hopeful sign: we would not have it otherwise.

I propose, this morning, to pursue, for a little way, (more, on such a subject, would be impossible,) the train of thought

suggested by the words of our text, 'The Word became flesh.'

1. It will be quite unnecessary for us on the present occasion to entangle ourselves in any philosophical discussion of the Name employed by St. John,—'The *Word*.' The thought which is present to St. John's mind in using the name is closely akin to that to which St. Paul gives expression, when he speaks of Christ as the *Power* of God and the *Wisdom* of God. He who became flesh is the *Word*, the *Revealer* of God, at once Power and Wisdom, Light and Life. Creation is part of His handiwork, as the Revealer of God. But creation is but a poor exponent of the mind and will of God. In order to reveal the *Father*, the Word must become flesh, and dwell amongst men, 'full of grace and truth.' In order to reveal the *Father*, the Word must live a man's life amongst men. It must be possible for men to *behold* His glory; and to behold in it the glory 'as of an only begotten Son from a *Father*.' Nothing less than the life of the Son upou earth,—as a *son*,—could reveal the Father. And that life, St. John says, *was* lived. I, John, saw it. 'We beheld his glory, a glory as of an only son from a father : ' for so, I think, unquestionably, the words ought to be rendered.

This, then, is St. John's contention. By sight, and by touch, and by voice, says he, I became acquainted with a certain human life;—a life, which had a peculiar charm, a special glory about it;—and that glory I can only describe as the glory of a well-beloved and only *son* from a *father*. Utterance, action, suffering, *all* were one continuous and incessant testimony to an unseen Father in heaven. I can only explain it by saying that He who lived that life was the *Word*, the Revealer of the Father; One, of whom it can be affirmed, that He was in the beginning, and was with God, and was God, and in due time became flesh, and 'dwelt,'—literally, 'tabernacled,' or pitched His tent for a brief season, like the heavenly visitant and denizen of another world that He was, 'amongst men.'

2. Thus, then, it appears, on St. John's showing, that that

which became human was truly Divine; and that which became subject to the conditions and limitations of space and time was truly Eternal. Let us endeavour to draw out one or two of the thoughts that are involved in these two statements.

(a) The Divine became human. That is to say,—the Divine laid hold of the human in such a way as to make the human, so far as it could be made, a true image and reflection of itself. As the old formulary phrases it:—‘One Christ:—One, not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh; but by taking of the Manhood into God.’ The language of the Creed is so guarded,—just as our language, in speaking of such high mysteries, ought to be guarded,—lest, whilst asserting the Divinity of Christ, and the fact of the Incarnation, we should destroy the very idea of Divinity altogether. If the Divinity could become co-extensive with the Humanity, it would cease to be Divinity. To guard against such a monstrous notion, the Creed uses this homely illustration:—‘As the reasonable soul and flesh is one man; so God and man is one Christ.’ *What* the soul is to the flesh in the one man; *that* the Divine is to the human in the One Christ. The lower and lesser mystery is employed to expound and illustrate the higher and greater.

All, then, that our faith in the Incarnation warrants us in asserting is, that in Jesus Christ we have ‘authentic tidings of invisible things,’—that, in Him, the Divine and human are so united and blent, that we can draw certain and reliable conclusions as to the nature of God, so far as *that* nature can and need be known by us. And oh! think what *this* means! Think what the difference is between saying, ‘Jesus is only a man seeking God,—adding one more to the many guesses as to the nature of God:’ and saying, ‘In Jesus we see God seeking man,—and seeking him out of pure love in order to save him:’—‘Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners:’—‘The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.’ True: there *may*, there *must* be, mysteries in the Divine Nature far beyond what even the Incarnation can tell us. The Incarnation tells



us all that we need to know. When we 'have told its isles of light, and *fancied* all beyond;' there must yet be heights and depths, in that High and Lofty One who inhabiteth eternity, which no fancy, however soaring, can penetrate.

In this sense, and under such limitations as these, did the Divine become human, or the Word become flesh. Why do I state the truth which we commemorate specially to-day in this guarded and cautious manner? I do so for the sake of the truth itself, and the fulness and thoroughness of its acceptance. Creation widens upon our view day by day; and with it widens also our sense of the incomprehensible vastness and eternity of the Creator. If I make the Incarnation the measure not only of that in God which it is necessary for our eternal life to know, but also the measure of God Himself, I am exposing your faith and my own in the truth of the Incarnation to a very perilous strain. For my own sake, and for yours, I dare not do this.

(b.) As we may say, in this guarded manner, that in the Incarnation the Divine became human; so we may say also, somewhat paradoxically, that, in the Incarnation, the Eternal became temporal,—clothed itself in forms of time and space, in order to reveal that which *was* before the foundation of the world,—which *is* from everlasting to everlasting. Here, as before, I would keep close to *that* which is of common human interest. I have already pointed out to you the amazing difference that it makes to our mental and spiritual attitude, whether we see in Jesus the image of the invisible God, or not. I would beg you now to mark, what an immense difference it makes to us, whether we view the work of Christ as designed with any other purpose than to reveal and to execute the will, which is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.

We all know, I should suppose, how easy it is to drift into a notion about the work of Christ, which amounts really to *this*, that He came not to *do* the will of God, but to *alter* it. And yet we cannot but see, that, the moment such a notion as this gets

possession of us, we have practically lost our hold upon the truth of the Incarnation. The Divine did *not* become human,—the Word was *not* made flesh,—if the will of the Son on earth was not at all times and in all things at one with the will of the Father in heaven; and if we may not accept the words, ‘Lo, I come to do thy will, O God,’ as a full and adequate statement of the mission of Jesus Christ. The work of Christ is, in fact, the invisible becoming visible,—the Eternal becoming temporal,—the Infinite, finite. Looking upon it, we see that which *was* from the beginning, and which *will be* to the end.

The Incarnation is, in short, the Sacrament of the Eternal Grace of God;—an outward and visible sign,—an *effectual* sign,—of a Grace, of which time is no measure; an outward and visible sign, given, when the fulness of the time was come,—interpreting the past,—forecasting the future. ‘When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, that we might receive the adoption of sons.’

3. I spoke to you last night of peace and joy; such joy as St. Paul refers to in the words of the Epistle of yesterday:—‘Rejoice in the Lord alway.’ We can see now what the real ground of all such rejoicing is, and how solid it is. The Incarnation unlocks for us the secret of the Divine, Eternal Will,—the Will which is at the root of all things, and which rules all things,—and shows us that its first and last word is *Love*. ‘We have known and believed,’ writes St. John elsewhere, ‘the love that God hath to us.’ And,—*What kind of love?* Let St. John again reply: ‘We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the *Saviour* of the world;’—*i. e.* the *Healer* of the world,—of its sin, and of its woe.

Let us try to-day, dear friends and brethren, to forget our own private and personal sorrows in this great common joy. To forget—do I say? No: that would be impossible; or, if possible, it would be wrong: not to forget, then, but to let the common joy overwhelm and swallow up for a moment the.

individual sorrow. At least, let our last thoughts now be given to the common joy.

We have created a great difficulty for ourselves in this matter by our fiction,—a fiction which has no foothold in the Bible, and which is repudiated with disdain by science ; our fiction, I say, of a first man, created absolutely perfect, both mentally and morally, of angelic virtue and of seraphic intelligence, whose utterly degenerate descendants we ourselves are,—whose pristine virtue and perfection we may hope one day, by God's mercy and grace, to recover. Of such a man, I repeat, the Bible knows nothing. On the contrary, its testimony, by the pen of St. Paul, is this, 'The first man is of the earth, earthy.' 'That was not first that is spiritual, but that which is natural.' *First*, the lower ; *then*, the higher : *first*, the earthy ; *then* the heavenly : *first*, the natural man ; *then*, the spiritual man : *this* is the true order of things, according to the teaching of the Bible ; and this is the order of things, according to the teaching of what we vaguely term 'science.' Upon the record of revelation, as upon the record of creation, there is stamped the same word, as summary of the contents of both,—*Progress* ;—progress, onward, upward, heavenward. For 'the first man is of the earth, earthy ;' but, 'the second man is the Lord, from heaven.' And, 'As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.'

In St. Paul's view, the Incarnation of the Son of God is a fresh point of departure in this great, gradual upward movement towards a final perfection. As a matter of historical fact, so it has been. The date,—Anno Domini, so and so, 1876, or whatever it may be,—is not a piece of mere Christian sentiment : it is the acknowledgment of a hard, incontrovertible fact. True ; we see as yet only the beginnings of the new order of things, of which the Incarnation is the fountain-head. For the purposes of God are wrought out slowly, through vast tracts of time, which baffle us by their immensity. But in these mere beginnings we can still trace the *tendency*, the *law*.

Its final triumph we can leave confidently in *His* hands, who sees the end from the beginning, and who, as St. Paul says, 'quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were,' because they must and shall be.

To-day, then, we will 'rejoice in the Lord.' We will rejoice in Him as the second Man, the Lord from heaven, the Head of a new and better creation. We will rejoice in Him as the *Word*,—the Revealer of the Father. We will rejoice in Him as the Incarnation of the Divine and the Eternal; the outward and visible and effectual sign of a Love and a Righteousness, whose final victory, however distant, is still assured. And, therefore, we will rejoice in Him, last of all, as our hope, in this life and in the next, both for ourselves and for all whom we love, whether on *this* side the grave or on *that*.

## SERMON VI.

### CHRIST, THE LIFE AND THE LIGHT.

JOHN I. 14.

And the Word was made flesh.

IN these words St. John describes that great mystery, which is the keystone of our Christian faith. 'The Word,' he says, 'became flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth.' Now we all, you know, profess to believe in the Incarnation of the Son of God, Jesus Christ. But it is quite a question, whether we all believe in it in the same deep yet simple way, in which St. John believed in it. At any rate, at this season of the year, we cannot do better than try to clear our minds upon this all-important subject. And if we wish to clear our minds upon it, we cannot do better than consult St. John's Gospel. For he wrote at a time when the supreme importance of this truth, and the vast results implied in it, had had time to begin plainly to disclose themselves. And therefore he wrote about it with the greatest possible care and accuracy, as well as with all simplicity of speech; so that the humblest reader, reading with attention and thought, might be able to understand and profit by his words.

'The Word became flesh:—such is St. John's statement. In order to understand the statement thoroughly, we must ask: First, what does St. John mean by 'The *Word*'? And,

secondly, what does he mean, when he says, that 'The Word was made,' or 'became,' '*flesh*'?

In the previous verses of the chapter St. John has been speaking of the Word; though only in the fourteenth verse does he begin to speak of the Word Incarnate. This is the first point that requires to be clearly understood. In the first thirteen verses of the chapter St. John speaks of the Word, his existence and his office, irrespective of and antecedent to the Incarnation. In the fourteenth verse he introduces the thought of the Incarnation: 'The Word became flesh: '—or, to use language of Latin origin, in place of the homelier Saxon, 'The Word became Incarnate.'

Bearing this point in mind, let us see what St. John has to tell us about the Word, who thus, when the fulness of the time was come, became flesh. He says, that the Word *was* in the beginning, and was with God, and was God; that He was in the beginning with God; that all things were made by Him; that in Him was life, and that the life was the light of men; a light shining in the darkness, and not comprehended by the darkness; a light which lighteth every man. He says further, that He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not; that He came unto his own, and his own received Him not; but that to all who did receive Him, He gave power to become the sons of God. Here is plenty of food for thought. Let us apply ourselves to it.

St. John starts from a point, which he describes as 'the beginning.' 'In the beginning was the Word: ' 'In the beginning the Word was with God.' By the very constitution of our minds we are compelled to start from such a beginning. Yet, strictly speaking, there is no such beginning. There is an infinity behind us, as well as before us; just as there is an infinity of star-besprinkled space around us. What St. John says, is, in effect, this:—Go back as far as you will or can, by any effort of reason or imagination; make what point in the

past you please your starting point :—still, at that point, however distant, there is the Word, and He is with God.

The science of the present day carries us back, or seems to carry us back, or at least affects to carry us back, to a point in the past, distant by millions and millions of years from the present moment ; a point in the past, when sun and moon and earth and planets were all one generally diffused nebulous mass of gaseous matter, extending far beyond the limits of the orbit of the most remote of the planets, and filling the enormous space thus circumscribed. For science, this is the beginning. And St. John, were he amongst us now, would say : ‘ Yes, and at that beginning there is the Word, and He is with God.’ And he would go on to say : ‘ That supposed nebulous mass, from which science starts as its postulate, whence came it ? And how came it to be endowed with those properties of light and heat, which the very hypothesis of science requires, and to revolve around an axis, and so to throw off, in cooling, those masses of detached matter which have become the planets of our solar system, leaving the shrunken nucleus of the original mass for centre and sun ? ’ And he would answer these questions by saying : ‘ All this is due to that Word, by whom all things were made ; and without whom was not anything made that was made.’

But St. John has much more to say than this. He refers all creation to the instrumentality of One whom he calls the ‘ *Word*, ’ whom, afterwards, he calls the ‘ *Light*, ’ and presently as Incarnate, the ‘ *Son*, ’—‘ The only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father.’ He tells us that this Word not only was in the beginning ; but was, in the beginning, with God ; was Himself Divine. Here indeed St. John essays a lofty flight. Yet evidently his words are weighed and guarded, few and solid. The throne of heaven, he tells us, has never been a solitary throne. ‘ *With God*, ’ that is, in his presence, in closest proximity to Him, in constant communication with Him (we speak after the manner of men), there is from the

beginning One, who is of the same nature with Him ; *his* 'WORD ;' the utterer of his thoughts, the revealer of his will. He utters those thoughts, He reveals that will,—first of all, by creation. That is to say,—all creation is expressive, speaks a language, has a meaning, bears a message. As the Psalmist says : 'The heavens declare the glory of God ; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.' Let science carry us back, all those ages, along its dim and perilous way ; and what do we find stamped upon every part of the almost illimitable course,—stamped also, with equal emphasis, upon that which is to science the beginning of the course ? What, but *law* ?—A reign of *law* ? As the Psalmist again says, 'He hath given them a law which shall not be broken.' And is not law *expressive* ? Does it not reveal ? Is it not significant ? Does it not bear witness to an *order*,—a Divine order of things,—a cosmos, not a chaos,—a Divine order, in which man too has his part and place ?

Moving on, step by step, St. John at this point introduces another thought. All creation is expressive ; but one part of creation is more expressive than another. Creation is not a dead level, but an ascending series. First the inorganic and inanimate world ; then the living being ; then the self-conscious life of man. 'Things' first : then, 'life' : then, 'light ;' that is, *persons*,—existence, self-conscious, rational and moral. 'All things were made by Him.' 'In Him was life ; and the life was the light of men.' All is by the Word,—*expressive* : but into the life which is the light of men,—that is to say, which in men becomes self-conscious, intelligent, capable of reflecting the Maker's image,—He, the Word, can put more meaning, more expression, than He could into the inorganic creation ; and so can render it more significant, more declaratory of the Divine thoughts, mind, and will.

Science, too, traces the same ascending series from the lower to the higher, from the inorganic to the organic, from the



irrational animal up to the reasoning man. Science attempts to affiliate each higher stage in the series to the lower one immediately preceding it, and so to exhibit the present order of things as the natural development of the primeval nebulous mass. Science is bound to attempt this ; and thus to solve the problem of the universe, if she can, in her own way, and within her own narrow limits. As believers in Christ, we have no interest in the solution of the problem one way or the other,—no interest in anything but the discovery of truth. Whether fresh acts of independent creative energy have taken place or not, since *that* which science counts the beginning, is a question which does not concern us at all as Christians. The sphere of Christian thought on these subjects lies wholly apart from the sphere of scientific thought ; and the one has neither need nor right to interfere with the other. As Christians we believe, what science can neither prove nor disprove ; that all creation rests at every moment,—at this moment, as much as in the beginning,—upon the Word and Will of God ; that Law, along with every other part and property of matter, is expressive of his mind ; that He is nearer to us, and speaks more plainly and intelligibly to us, in the plant or the flower, than in the rock ; but is nearest of all to us, speaks *most* plainly and intelligibly in our own souls ; where He is light to us, light shining in our darkness, and alas ! too often not comprehended by that darkness. ‘This commandment,’ said Moses of old, ‘which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it and do it? But the Word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it.’

From the creative Word St. John passes to the indwelling Light,—that ‘true Light, which (as he says) lighteth every man.’ He who is the creative Word is also the indwelling Light. He

who is the fount of all being, is also the light of man's being, the illumination of reason and conscience, the sun of his soul. This light, dear brethren, is within each one of us. It shines in our darkness. The light is all his : the darkness is all our own. Often and often, the darkness fails to comprehend or understand the light ; is only startled by it ; shrinks from it like a guilty thing surprised ; would fain quench it, if it could. We all know something of this. We all know the warning voice of conscience within, convincing us of sin and of righteousness. Most often we think of it as only one part of our complex nature reproving another part, the higher reproving the lower, the nobler reproving the baser. But really the voice is the voice of the indwelling Word and Light ; and conscience is only as it were the ear of the soul, by which we hear that voice : not itself the voice, but only the organ by which it reaches the soul. Hence it is that the voice speaks with such authority, and that the guilt-laden soul shrinks from it. It is no debate between one part of us and another part of us. It is God's own controversy with the spirit of man, carried on by that Word which is his revealer. Yes : within every soul, there is as it were a house of God and a gate of heaven. Did we but realize it, how different would our lives become ! What a sobering, reverential awe would take possession of us ; what a horror and hatred of sin ; what a holy fear of God ! It would be with us, as it was with Jacob when he wakened out of his dream, and felt how near, all unknown before to him, God was. 'How dreadful is this place ! This is none other than the house of God ; and this is the gate of heaven.'

So it has been since the Incarnation. And so it was before the Incarnation. Whatever the physical basis of life may be, the metaphysical basis of life is ever one and the same, even the divine eternal Word. The Word, who was in the beginning, and was in the beginning with God, did not make man, as man makes a thing,—a piece of furniture, or a house, or what not,—turning it out of hand, and so leaving it to shift for itself. In

the moment of creation He became to man the mysterious basis of that strange mysterious thing which we call *life*; the indwelling light, through whose guidance and illumination man might know God, and become like God. So wondrous, so subtle, so passing thought, are the ties which bind man to Him who made him! By rights so mighty, rights of creation, rights of indwelling possession, does man belong to Him. Truly He came, and still comes, to '*his own*.'

In this way, all those long ages before the Incarnation, He was in the world, a world made by Him, yet a world which knew Him not. To the first man that ever trode the soil of earth, He was, what He is to us, and what He will be to the last man, as to the first,—Life and Light. So, through those long ages, He kept coming to his own; to be received, that is, recognized, welcomed, embraced,—only by a few. Here and there some pagan philosopher or king, some hero or poet, turned towards the inward Light, and allowed himself to be irradiated by it,—to be transfigured into a true child of God by it. 'As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become sons of God.' Hebrew prophets, psalmists, and saints saw far more clearly than pagan worthies could be expected to do; and they said plainly that it was the Word of the Lord, and nothing else, that time after time came to them, reproving them, enlightening them, strengthening them, enabling them to see the truth and utter it, to see the right and do it. Only a few, I repeat, received Him. Only to a few, St. John says, was it *given* to receive Him. They were 'born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.'

And now we can safely address ourselves to the second part of our subject, and inquire what St. John means, when he says that 'The Word became flesh.' That the Word,—being what He has been from the first, and still is, to man, the metaphysical basis of life, the indwelling light,—should Himself become a man, and dwell for some thirty-three years amongst men, full of grace and truth, need not surprise us; ought to be no stumbling-


block to us ; has nothing incredible or unnatural about it. Certainly it would be in the highest degree unnatural and incredible and monstrous, that the Word should become man, if that Word were not, by original constitution, so intimately related to man. But once see the spiritual constitution of man in this living and life-giving Word of God, as John and Paul saw it, and the Incarnation becomes not only not unnatural, but, in the highest sense of the word, *natural* ; not merely not incredible, but eminently credible, because so entirely in accordance with man's needs, and with God's original constitution of human nature. The Light that was only inward ; and, being only inward, was dimmed and almost quenched by man's darkness ; must needs become outward also, in order that it may shine in all its native purity and strength, and shining thus may reveal God to man, and man to himself. And how could it thus become outward, save in a human life ; that sweet and lovely and altogether exquisite human life, which the Gospel pages mirror to us ? *There*, in those pages, the inward voice of conscience becomes an outward voice also ; the latter attested by the former, the former cleared and deepened and intensified by the latter. The voice of Jesus, be sure, has its echo within every one of us. If the echo is faint and far away and almost inaudible for many of us, *that* is our own fault. It need not be so. If we will but follow it, and do according to its behests, it will become ever nearer and clearer and sweeter, until at last the outward voice and the inward voice are truly one ; and the words are fulfilled to us : 'My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me ; and I give unto them eternal life ; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.'

Thus 'the Word became flesh.' The inward light, the inward voice, the inward life, became an outward light also, an outward voice, an outward life. And this outward life was in every respect a true human life,—tempted, suffering, dying,—yet, all along, sinless. 'He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.' In another place, St. John insists very

earnestly upon this perfect and complete humanity of the Incarnate Word. He makes the confession of it the test of truth. 'Hereby know ye the Spirit of God,' so he writes in his first Epistle: 'Every Spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every Spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that Spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.' St. John lived long enough to know how anxious people would be to pare down the truth that the Word became flesh, until almost all its meaning and force was gone. Some would say,—as in his day they were already saying,—that it was inconceivable that the Divine Nature should degrade itself so far as to ally itself to our poor sinful human nature. Others would say,—as, again, in his day they were already saying,—that, though there might be a semblance of union between the two natures, still it was only a *semblance*, nothing more. But St. John will have nothing short of the truth, that the Word became flesh; yes, became flesh in the form of a suffering, tempted, dying human being,—Jesus of Nazareth: that the Eternal Life was thus manifested in a mortal life: that the Eternal Light shone, for a little space, through the veil of human flesh.

On this same Rock of the Incarnation of the Eternal Word, Life, and Light, we can securely build all the other truths of our most Holy Faith;—the Fatherliness of God, the brotherhood of men, and all else that most concerns us to know and believe for our souls' health. To-night, however, this one foundation-truth may well suffice us. I will just point out one or two applications of it, and so leave it with you.

Wherever, in human nature, there is a trace or vestige of light, *there* we have a manifestation of the presence of the indwelling Word,—the same Eternal Word, who dwells in our souls as Light. It is possible that there may be some here, who are, or have been, students of the old heathen literatures of Greece and Rome and India. In those ancient literatures they will find many vestiges



of light,—many signs and witnesses, therefore, of the indwelling Word. Let them learn to give the glory of that light to Him to whom that glory is due,—to Him who is the One source of all light, of all moral excellence, of all intellectual truth. Such singular illustration, however, of the meaning of the truth of St. John's words comes within the reach only of a few. Missionary records will supply other examples of the Light shining in the darkness, and sometimes comprehended by the darkness; of the Word coming to his own, and sometimes received by his own : in times and places where the Gospel message had never penetrated. Such examples are precious testimonies to the universality of the indwelling Light ; to the truth, in fact, of St. John's words, 'The life was the light of men : ' 'that was the true Light which lighteth every man.'

Again :—mark once more, and on a different deeper ground, what I asked you yesterday morning to mark,—*the sacredness of human nature*. True ; it has its own natural darkness,—darkness evil, hateful, accursed. But in that darkness a light shines,—a Divine Light. The basis of our common human nature is still and ever the Divine Word. There is a sacredness attaching to it which should make it precious, honourable, reverend, in our eyes. Woe to him who profanes it in himself, by prostituting it to base uses,—to lust, or avarice, or intemperance ! Woe to him also who dishonours it in another, by withholding the respect, or the care, or the help, which is its due ! Truly, we are curiously and wonderfully made, in a sense of which even the Psalmist himself dreamed not. Curious and wonderful, certainly, is this bodily frame, with its structure of bone and muscle and sinew, its network of artery and nerve and vein. But how much more curious and wonderful is that spiritual organism of reason and conscience and soul, with the Eternal Word of God for its basis and root ! Of *this*, even more than the other, we may surely say in the Psalmist's words ; ' I will praise thee ; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made : marvellous are thy works ; and that my soul knoweth right well.'

## SERMON VII.

### THE FINAL ACCOUNT.

#### REVELATION XX. 11—15.

And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away ; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God ; and the books were opened : and another book was opened, which is the book of life : and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it ; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them : and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

I PASSED these words over very lightly, when we came to them a fortnight ago ; partly, because I wanted the time for another purpose ; and partly, because I wished to reserve them for the present occasion. The last Sunday service of the departing year always possesses, for myself and I should suppose for all of us, a peculiar interest and solemnity ; and one is anxious to select a subject which shall harmonize with the gravity of the occasion. A more solemn and a more rousing subject than that suggested by my text, it would be impossible to find. May God give us grace to profit by it !

I need hardly tell you, for you will understand of yourselves, how much I shrink from commenting upon a passage so terrible as this. The great white Throne,—the books opened,—the

dead surrendered by death and hell,—the judgment delivered,—the sentence executed ; *here* are elements of terror, upon which we hardly dare to meditate. Painters and poets may essay at their leisure to depict the scene. The forms of art which they employ serve to subdue the terror of it, and to throw the whole thing to a distance from the conscience. *We* have to strive to confront the bare spiritual reality, in all its tremendous truth, stripped of all the softening disguises, which the painter's brush or the poet's pen can throw around it. *They* address themselves to the fancy and the imagination ; *we* would fain speak to conscience and spirit.

The passage, like so many others in the Revelation of St. John, has points of contact with the visions of older prophets ; more particularly with the Book of Daniel. In Dan. vii. 9, 10, you will find the words, which approach most nearly to the language of St. John, and which may to a certain extent have suggested it : 'I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of Days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool : his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him : thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him : the judgment was set, and the books were opened.' I say, 'may to a certain extent have suggested it,' because the likeness between the vision of the prophet of the old dispensation and that of the prophet of the new is, after all, more superficial than real. The similarity, such as it is, is in the *form* only : the *substance* is different. Daniel's vision is of some preliminary scene or interlude of judgment ; John's is of that last account and final settlement, after which there can be no other. It is succeeded by the new heaven and the new earth, wherein dwelleth for ever and ever righteousness.

As to the times and the seasons of this last act in the world's great drama, John gives us, as we should expect, no information.



He describes one last conflict between the powers of evil and of good ; and then follows,—apparently without any interval,—the vision of final judgment. The Throne is set,—the Judge is upon it,—the dead are summoned,—each case is separately investigated,—sentence is passed and executed. As to the times and seasons, I repeat, we *expect* no information. For *this*, surely, is that day, of which Jesus said to his disciples : ‘ But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.’

The great assize, then, is on the point of being opened. The Tribunal is ready ; and the Judge is placed. ‘ I saw,’ writes St. John, ‘ a great white throne ’ ; ( ‘ great,’ in distinction from the lesser thrones mentioned in the fourth verse, ‘ I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them : ’ ‘ *white*,’ as seen in purest light, and symbolizing the most blameless justice :) ‘ I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it ; ’ that is, *Christ the Judge*, according to St. Paul’s words, ‘ We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ ; that every one may receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad ; ’ but *Christ the Judge*, not in the humble garb of his humanity, but in all the awe of his Divine Majesty, so that, according to St. John’s truly gigantic imagery, ‘ from his face the earth and the heaven fled away ; and there was found no place for them.’ The scene on which the humanity of the future is to play its part, is in an instant shifted and transformed,—transformed under the spell of the gaze of Him who is seated on the Throne. The old things pass away, and all things become, in a moment, new : so that, when St. John looks again, he can say, ‘ And I saw a new heaven and a new earth ; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away.’

So it may be with the *scene* on which humanity plays its part. He who *made* can also *unmake*, and *remake*, as He will ; and *that* in an instant, so that his mere look shall be a fulfilled command. But it is different when it comes to be a question

of the souls of men,—the individual atoms, of which the one Whole, Humanity, is as it were composed. For the difference between *things* and *persons*,—between the things without will, and the beings invested with will,—is an eternal difference. He that sitteth upon the Throne can make all *things* new, with a word, or a touch, or a look. But there are *persons* to deal with as well as *things*; and the renewal of the former is a very different work and process from the renewal of the latter. The latter may be disposed of in a moment: but not so the former. Mark, then, what follows: ‘And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before the throne; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.’

The first thing that strikes us here, is, I imagine, the *universality* of the judgment. *All* who have ever lived are included in it: *all* must appear before the bar of Christ: *all* must give account of themselves to God. ‘I saw the dead, small and great, stand before the throne:’ ‘The sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and *hell*:’ (not the place of torment, as *we* figure hell to ourselves, but that ‘hell,’ that unseen world, that receptacle of the souls of the departed,—as to which we say of Jesus in our Creed,—‘He descended into hell:’) ‘Death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them.’ No soul is kept back from the judgment-seat. The custodian of every soul, whoever he be,—the sea, the earth, death, hell, name him as you will,—is under bond to surrender that soul, at the moment predetermined in the counsels of the Judge.

And in the next place, what strikes us, is, I imagine, the *individuality* of the judgment. ‘The books were opened: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works:’ ‘They were judged every

man according to their works.' *No* soul can escape the judgment: *each* is judged by itself, as though there were no other soul in existence besides; each, according to its works; each, out of the book which itself has written. For I see no reason to doubt the correctness of the view, which, I think, is commonly taken, and according to which 'the books' contain the works; each individual soul having its own separate book, which is in fact the history of that soul; each individual soul, day by day, and year after year, writing that book,—writing it all unconsciously, it may be,—but writing it in characters indelible, which One All-seeing Eye at least can read; writing it against that day when it will be opened, and, side by side with it, the Book of Life, for scrutiny and for final award.

Of course I need not tell *you*, that the language of St. John, here as elsewhere, is metaphysical or symbolical. There are no '*books*' actually written, and laid up in the archives of heaven, against the great day of account. The books are really summed up in the *character*. The *character* is the index to the contents of each book. You may say, that the works proceed from the character; but the works also react upon the character, and shape it to its final result. What we call the *character*, that is, the stamp or impress, which the soul is receiving through all which it does and suffers in this life; *this* is the all-important thing. *This* is the net result of life. *This* is unerringly gauged at the judgment-seat of Christ. It is compared with the corresponding entry in the Book of Life; the book which contains the pattern and ideal of every soul,—pattern and ideal, which, though different in every case, is yet always shaped upon one common model,—the image of Christ. The two, I say, are compared together: the character of the soul, as it actually is, and the Divine ideal for that same soul. The two are compared together, and judgment given accordingly. 'The books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged

out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.'

Let us pause here for a moment, and try to estimate the moral pressure, the weight of it, and the nature of it, which is thus put upon us. Far in the distance it may be, but sure and inevitable, lies for each one of us this fact of judgment. 'We shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ,' so St. Paul writes: and, 'Every one of us shall give account of himself to God.' The vision of St. John does but give shape and form to a truth, to which every conscience bears witness. We confess, we dare not deny, that we are responsible for our actions. This natural sense of responsibility gains depth and breadth, gains clearness and definiteness, when it is brought into the light of the Holy Scriptures, and, not least, of this vision of St. John. It is found to be a responsibility, not merely for what we *do*, but for what we *are*. St. Paul felt that he might preach to others, and do all kinds of good works, and yet at the last be himself 'a castaway.' It is possible to be immersed in good works, and yet not be good oneself. It is possible to be debarred from all Christian activity, and yet be so writing one's book, that it shall bear comparison, in the last day, with the corresponding entry in the Book of Life. The mould into which one's own spirit is being cast, as the years run on, is the all-important thing for each. Are we growing, year by year, more gentle, more just, more unselfish, more charitable, more patient, more desirous to do God's will, and to be a help and blessing to our fellow-men? Is it *so* with us? or is it the reverse of this?

That we are judged according to our works: according to our works, as at once revealing and determining what we are, is, I know, an unwelcome doctrine to many. But it is, none the less, the clear teaching of the Holy Scriptures: and it is a very salutary teaching. Let me entreat you, my dear friends, to lay it to heart; and not least, on this last Sunday service of the old year. At such a moment the past comes out in all

distinctness against the uncertainties of the future. What has that past, with all its sins and sorrows, its strivings and its aspirations, made us? What are we, day by day, becoming? God forbid that I should question the power of his Spirit to give a new spiritual bent and direction at any moment, and therefore even on a death-bed, to our lives and characters; or the justice of his Christ to discern the untested promise of the future in the repentance of the present. But I need not tell *you*, that it is madness to trust the awful certainties of the judgment-day to such vague possibilities of future repentance; and that, if the work of a life is postponed to its last hours, it can only be done then, at the best, in fear and trembling, in agonizing apprehensions, in shame and bitterness of soul. Why should we run such awful risks of perdition; when, 'behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation'?

But we must pass on. John's vision does not end here: and we must pursue it to its terrible climax. After judgment comes the sentence. 'Death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.'

'*The lake of fire.*' I hope you will not think that I wish to soften down or smoothe away any wholesome fear which such a phrase might inspire, when I remind you that the phrase is, of course, a *symbol*, not the expression of a literal fact. Such literal lake of fire, of course, there is not; just as there are no actual books, stored in the archives of heaven, in which is registered the case of each individual human soul. The truth is, Milton's grand poetry goes with us, without our knowing it, as we read St. John's Revelation; and 'the lake of fire' becomes thus to us, *not* as St. John intended it to be, a pure spiritual symbol, *but* almost (if I may say so) a geographical expression; or, at least, as real and local as the seas and lakes which astronomers lay down on the surface of the moon. It requires a strong effort of reason to shake off the fascination,

and to expound St. John, not from Milton, but from himself. When we are able to do so, when the spell of the wizard's poetry is no longer upon us, and we are alone with St. John himself, strange thoughts of mingled hope and terror cross our minds; the terror first, the hope afterwards. The vista of the seer,—so far as *those* are concerned who are not found written in the book of life,—is closed by the lake of fire. He sees them cast into this lake, and he sees no more. Thought of terror, certainly! for what a doom of anguish is embodied in the thought! But look a little closer, before we turn in mere terror away. The two great elements of purification are combined here: the *fire*; of which it is said, 'He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire:' the *water*, of which He said Himself, 'Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.' And it is 'the *lake* of fire;' not the stagnant pool or marsh, or the vast and boisterous ocean, but the bright and breezy lake. The word is used in the Greek version of the beautiful *cviith* Psalm, in the verse: 'He turneth the wilderness into a standing water, and dry ground into water-springs.' But St. John's chief association with the word must have been in connection with the beautiful lake of Gennesaret, whose waters had been consecrated for *him*, as for *us*, by his Master's presence. This alone is the *Lake* of the Holy Land; all else is sea. It seems to me impossible to dwell long upon this terrific symbol of St. John's vision of judgment without a feeling of hope,—without a dim perception of the purpose and the meaning of the doom thus described;—a *purpose*, altogether consistent with love as well as with justice; but a *meaning*, which it must be left to the ages upon ages of the future to fully disclose: yes, a feeling of subdued and awe-struck hope, such as that which one of our own poets essays to describe in his vision of sin:—

'And on the glimmering limit far withdrawn,  
God made Himself an awful rose of dawn.'

Far, far away, beyond the utmost verge of the lake of fire,

springs a faint rosy streak of dawn, telling of light beyond. We can say no more. But this is enough.

It may sound strange and paradoxical ; but the other terrible phrase of these last two verses of the chapter, '*This is the second death*,'—has upon my own mind just the same effect as the first,—of terror first, softening afterwards into a faint margin of hope. St. Paul says, 'He that is dead is freed from sin.' We all believe that the faithful servants of Jesus Christ find in death their release and emancipation from the bondage of sin. The chains against which they have ever been struggling are snapped ; and they are at last free. When we read of a 'second death,' and read of it as connected with 'the lake of fire : ' (one or two of the oldest MSS. read, 'This is the second death, the lake of fire' : but even without these words the connection between the two symbols is apparent :) it is impossible to crush down the surmise, that possibly this second death may do for those, who were not found written in the book of life, what the first death had failed to do ; and, albeit through long-drawn agonies of remorse and repentance, sign their discharge from sin, and enter them again after ages of suffering in the book of life. It is impossible, I say, thank God, to crush down the surmise : but, like the hope already described, it flutters over a sea of terror, like some flickering beacon-light just level with a wild waste of stormy waves, telling of land beyond.

St. John says that death and hell were cast into the same lake of fire. Their work is done, and the seer sees them no more. He who is described in the first chapter of the Revelation as 'having the keys of hell and of death,'—that is, as having full power over them, and using them for his own just and gracious purposes,—now needs their services no longer. The decree is gone forth : 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes : and there

shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain : for the former things are passed away.'

It may seem to some, that I have interpreted John's sombre vision too hopefully. And there will be those who think that it is quite wrong to whisper even the faintest surmise of hope on such a subject, lest perchance the restraining fear of future punishment should thereby be weakened, and wicked men feel themselves more at liberty to please themselves, to their own destruction. But, rightly understood, the true Scriptural doctrine of retributive justice, which St. Paul, for example, expresses in the words, 'Be not deceived : God is not mocked : for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap ;' becomes far more powerful for moral good, when it is emancipated from the hideous dogma of endless misery and torture, than it can be, so long as it is confounded with it. Men easily slip out of the grasp of this dogma, just because it is one of such unimaginable horror ; soothing themselves with the notion, that a doom so dreadful must be reserved only for the worst of sinners, amongst whom of course they do not reckon themselves. But let them only understand the true Scriptural doctrine of future punishment, and reason and conscience alike bear witness to them that it is, and must be, true. It is one thing to risk the danger of an almost incredible doom of endless woe ; it is another thing to face the certainty of just and inevitable punishment.

On the other hand, there will be those who will receive with great thankfulness and joy what has been said to-night about the faint margin of hope, which we discern beyond the horizon of the lake of fire. They have found that the common view puts a strain upon their faith in God, which they hardly know how to bear. It is an unspeakable comfort to them to be assured that the common view is not the Scriptural view. Let me in conclusion just beg of them to be content to leave the matter where the Scriptures leave it,—where St. John leaves it.



Left *so*, it is a wholesome and a rousing thought, stirring to the conscience, bracing to the will. Pursue it on the wings of speculation, beyond what the Holy Scriptures warrant; and we soon get lost in mazes, out of which we can find no escape. In this, as in many other things, we must be content, whilst here, to see through a glass, darkly, and to know in part; leaving it for another world to see face to face, and to know even as we are known.

And now, dear friends, farewell. God grant that what has been said to-night may not have been said in vain! God grant that the last hours of the old year may bring with them many a throb of true repentance for past sins and failures; many an earnest resolution of amendment; many an upward spring of prayer and aspiration! Then if this be so,—if it be genuine, and if it be genuinely carried out,—whether we are spared till the year has run its round again or not, all will be well. In that last great day, when the judgment is set, and the books are opened, *ours* will be, *not* the awful lake of fire and the second death, *but* the name written in the book of life,—entrance into the City of God,—access to the water of life and the tree of life. Amen.

## SERMON VIII.

### THE ETERNAL TREASURE.

MATTHEW vi. 19—21.

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

THE last day and the last Service of the year always suggest a special train of thought. Not that there is any difference really between one day or hour or minute, and another. The earth does not really ever come round again to the same point in space. The orbit which she describes,—the path which she traces through the heavens,—is never, from one year to another, the same;—is ever itself adrift. The passage from December 31st, 1876, to January 1st, 1877, has no fixed point in the earth's movements answering to it. It is an imaginary line that we cross to-night,—but none the less powerful to affect us, because imaginary. The serious thoughts which at least pass through the minds of us all, as we transfer ourselves, not without effort, from the old date to the new, help us to realize the solemnity of the *flight* of time (as we call it), not merely from year to year, but from moment to moment,—every year and all the year through. St. Paul's words, written not with reference to any mere change of seasons and dates, but with reference to the

never-ceasing, inevitable changes in the form and fashion of the world, come home to us to-night with peculiar force :—‘ But this I say, brethren, the time is short : it remaineth that both they that have wives be as though they had none ; and they that weep, as though they wept not ; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not ; and they that buy, as though they possessed not ; and they that use this world, as not abusing it ; for the fashion of this world passeth away.’

Searching for a subject that might occupy us, suitably and profitably, on such a night as this, it seemed to me that I could not do better for myself and you, than engage in the study of these familiar words of Jesus, in which He bids us weigh well the comparative claims of earth and heaven, time and eternity, upon us, and adjust our whole manner of life accordingly :—‘ Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal : but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal : for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.’

It is a curious, but (I think) an undoubted, fact, that earth does not relax its hold upon us, as the years go on. It might be expected, that the old would part with this life more readily than the young. The very reverse, I believe, is really the case. The young die more easily than the old. Every year that passes over our heads binds us more closely to the life that now is. And *this* quite apart from any question of moral goodness, and what we should call real *fitness* to die. Take a young person and an old person,—as to whom the bystanders would feel, rightly *or* wrongly—(for the judgment of men is of course fallible here—), that they were equally prepared to die,—equally advanced in goodness and virtue, according to the standard of their respective ages ;—and I should venture to predict, that the shrinking from death would be much less keenly felt in the case of the young person, than in the case of

the old, whatever heathen poets may suggest to the contrary. Now this sounds strange and unaccountable at first ;—but it admits, I fancy, of a very reasonable explanation :—and the matter has an important bearing, as we shall see, upon our subject of to-night.

The force of mere habit,—of mere use and wont,—goes a long way towards explaining the fact. Year by year we get increasingly familiar with this life,—its contents and surroundings. We get attached to it, as a *whole*,—as well as to a number of its details. We get attached to it, as we do to a house that we have lived in, or the furniture that has been round us, for many years. It ceases to be the strange and formidable thing to us that it once was. It ceases to have any great surprises for us. But just in proportion as this life ceases to be strange and formidable, the life beyond becomes increasingly what this life has ceased to be. To the young, the future of this life and the future of the life beyond are almost equally full of strange and even alarming possibilities. The plunge into the altogether unknown and dark future beyond the grave is hardly more tremendous, than the plunge into the partially known and dimly-lighted future on this side the grave.

But it may be thought that this binding force of use and wont will be counterbalanced by a certain detaching force, which will be increasingly felt as the years pass by ;—that there is a centrifugal force ever more and more brought into play as time goes on, which will counteract and more than counteract the centripetal force which we have just analyzed. Gradually, year by year, our loved ones,—husbands, wives, children, parents, friends,—are transferred from this side of death to the other. Their hands are as it were stretched out to us from beyond the grave,—beckoning us over that great gulf which is fixed between us and them,—drawing us where they are. Surely, it will be said, we have here a detaching force, which ever grows in strength with the growing years, and compels the tyrant earth to relax its hold upon us. And doubtless there are

times in the lives of most, when the hands of love stretched out to us from the unseen heaven above draw us so mightily, that it seems an easy thing to die. The widow, the widower, the father, the mother, know this well. Many a little child has so carried the parents' hearts with it into that better land, that they have longed to follow, could they but break their chain. But gradually earth reasserts its mastery. Not less dear than before, but fainter and ever fainter grows the image of the loved one. That cloud of mystery, which envelopes and *must* envelope death and the world beyond death, receives him out of our sight. New surroundings, strange and to us unimaginable associations, are *theirs*. Given to one another again we shall be :—of *that* we are sure. But *how* ? and *where* ? and in *what* transfigured form ? and under *what* new conditions ? To such questions as these we can only guess the answer :—and the impossibility of answering them makes us cling more fondly than ever to the loved ones who are still left us on earth. The death which restores the lost treasure to us, robs us of the treasures that are ours here. And the sorrowful alternative puzzles our will : until at last the earthward attraction overpowers the heavenward, and the detaching force, felt so strongly for the moment, is felt no more. Thus, in every way, death becomes not easier, not less formidable, to us, as the years roll on and the hair turns grey and the sight fails,—not easier, not less formidable, *but* the very reverse.

I may be speaking to some young people to-night, who think how easy it were to die. And I may be speaking to some older people, who feel, and with much self-reproach feel, the increasing difficulty and even dread of dying. And it may be well for both,—both for young and old,—to understand, why their feelings about death are what they are ;—that the seeming facility is no real proof of preparation, any more than the instinctive repugnance is a proof of want of preparation, for the inevitable passage through the awful gate of death into the mystery beyond. The true preparation for this passage is a thing quite apart from the

feelings, whether of complacency or of terror, with which we contemplate the passage itself. And it is of this true preparation that I want to speak to you to-night,—guiding myself, as I do so, simply by these words of Jesus, which I have taken as my text. If only this true preparation is being diligently made,—the feelings may be dismissed from our consideration. They need not trouble us one way or the other. If nature is strong, God is stronger. He will take care of us. The Father's hands may be trusted to guide us through the dark valley, and to receive us beyond.

Now let us think these words of Jesus very carefully over. 'Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.'

Now it would not be difficult to treat these words in a vein of sentiment, which might leave on your minds the impression that you had heard, what *you* ought to hear and what *I* ought to say in this place;—an impression, elevating perhaps for the moment, but which, I need not tell you, would soon fade from your minds, when you took your place in the world again, and would leave not a trace of good behind. But Christ's words are always very practical words,—full of wise counsel for our safe guidance through the tangled and dangerous affairs of this life. And it is such wise practical counsel that we must try to extract from his words and apply to our own case to-night. There is no practical use in dilating upon the joys and glories of heaven;—when by 'heaven' is only meant the felicity which awaits the good beyond death. Pictures,—for which fancy must supply canvas, colour, form, everything,—can do us no real good. We want for the conduct of life something more solid.

The question is,—What does Christ mean by laying up treasure

on earth, and laying up treasure in heaven? Is He speaking merely of money? Would He only remind us, that, according to the homely proverb, 'the winding-sheet has no pockets?' Is this all? Nay, we need no heaven-sent teacher,—still less a *Divine* teacher,—to tell us this.

He Himself explains, what He means by 'earth' and 'heaven;' and what he means also by laying up treasure. 'Earth' He defines as the perishable, the temporary, the precarious;—'Where moth and rust corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal.' 'Heaven' He defines as the imperishable, the eternal, the abiding;—'Where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.' Our treasure is, where our heart is. 'Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.' We are laying up for ourselves treasures on earth or treasures in heaven, according as our affections are set upon what is perishable and temporary and precarious, or upon what is imperishable and eternal and abiding. This, in general, is the teaching of Jesus in our text. But this general teaching requires, for practical guidance, to be reduced to details.

We shall perhaps put the matter in the clearest light to ourselves, if we put it in the form of a question, thus:—'What can we take with us over the bridge of death?' What we can take with us is clearly capable of being made treasure in heaven.

To this question we may feel at first inclined to reply;—'Nothing:—we can take nothing, absolutely nothing, with us.' But a little reflection shows us, that the very question itself implies that we take *ourselves* with us:—*ourselves*,—that is, a *character*; a *personality*; a formed and definite character,—a personality that has received a stamp of a certain kind in its passage through this life,—a living soul having upon it an impress, of one sort or another, through contact with the things and beings of this earth, acting upon, and reacted upon by, its own inward spiritual forces of will and conscience and reason and affection and the like. Is this a small matter? Is it not

a matter of the deepest and most solemn interest to us? This *self*, this *character*, thus formed around the inmost core of our being,—formed around it by the combined action of inward force and outward circumstance through all the years, many or few, of life,—do we drop it, think you, at the gateway of death? Nay, surely; we can no more spring from off it, than we can spring off our own shadow. *It* must needs go with us into the presence of the Judge.

We shall see by and by what an important bearing this has upon the actual conduct of life and our duty in relation to it. But before turning to this branch of our subject, let us consider, what else there is,—*if* anything,—which we take with us across the bridge, or—(to change the metaphor into one equally true, though the very opposite of this)—across the gulf, or chasm, of death.

We take with us, certainly, the human affections by which we cling to those whom we love. These, though too often (alas!) soiled by earth, are not themselves ‘*of the earth.*’ Each, as he reaches the quiet shore of eternity, must surely look back, longingly and yearningly, upon the loved ones left behind. With each it must surely be, according to those exquisite lines :—

‘I watch thee from the quiet shore :  
Thy spirit up to mine can reach :  
Though in dear words of human speech  
We two communicate no more.’

How could it be otherwise, when these affections have become, as they often do become and ought to become, a part of our very selves,—woven and wrought into the very texture of our being ;—or, at the least, the innermost garment of that character or personality, which has grown, in the lapse of years, round the central core of our spiritual being?

What else we take with us,—whether anything or nothing,—I dare not pretend to say. What belongs properly to brain and nerve, must be dropped, I presume, with brain and nerve.



Can any one,—can the most skilful anatomist,—can the most accomplished physiologist,—tell us, exactly, what *that* is? I think not :—and for our present inquiry it matters not to decide. All the needful materials for practical application are already at our disposal. We want no more.

So long as we are *in* this world, we are of course compelled to *use* the world :—we are compelled to handle and use the things, as to which it must be said,—‘moth and rust corrupt them ; thieves break through and steal them.’ Our life, from day to day, is made up of such things. We cannot take them with us into ‘the region very far away :’—they are essentially ‘of the earth, earthy.’ But they leave their mark upon us, for evil or for good, according as we use them. Temporal themselves, the mark which they make upon us may be eternal.

Hence proceeds St. Paul’s earnest warning ;—‘They that use this world, as not abusing it.’ Take any case whatever, by way of illustration ;—any conceivable case of human life ;—the life of a professional man,—or the life of a man engaged in business,—or the life of the mother of a family,—or whatever you please. How small are the things which go to make up the daily round of life in each individual case ! little household cares and labours ;—little details of business or professional duty ;—presenting little of change or variety from day to day ! Yet these little things,—each of them, as it comes,—give opportunity for kindness, for probity, for honour, for courtesy, for painstaking performance of the duties of our station ;—OR, *for the reverse*. Each little thing in turn tests us,—puts us to proof,—enters into the probation and discipline of our character ;—and leaves us, not precisely as it found us, but either a little better, or a little worse. The things themselves perish in the using ;—but the use or the abuse of them leaves its permanent trace upon the character,—upon that character which we carry with us, as we have seen, and cannot help carrying with us, over that awful bridge of death, which at once unites and severs the seen world and the unseen. These little things

are as the little drops of water, which, falling year by year, at last hollow out the hardest stone. No microscope that human skill ever devised, could detect or measure the amount of work done by each single drop. But not even the rudest instrument is needed to trace the accumulated work of years. It stands out to view, self-evident, undeniable, so that he who runs may see it.

Each moment, then, has in it a portion of the destinies of eternity:—and hence the inherent value of even the smallest atom or measure of time;—of *every* such atom or measure, and not merely of *that*, which, to-night, with one beat, will tick the old year into the new. But it does not therefore follow that we are to be for ever thinking of the effects of *this* and *that* upon our own character, and, therefore, upon our own immortal destiny. Of such self-engrossment no good could come. We have to meet each thing as it comes, be it small or great, pleasant or painful, with a cheerful, hopeful, truthful, dutiful, self-forgetting spirit,—our wills set and bent to do the will of God,—our minds made up to walk ever, by his grace, in the path of honour and duty and charity and uprightness. Then each little thing, as it comes, will take its due effect for good upon us. All things, even the least things, will work together for our highest good. The hard, inveterate rock of selfish habit and sinful impulse,—the ‘heart of stone,’ as the Scriptures call it,—will gradually, by little and little, be worn away. At last, when the supreme moment comes, we shall not need to be unclothed, but clothed upon. Mortality will be swallowed up of life.

Thus must we use the things, which we cannot take with us into the world beyond this,—the things perishable, transitory, precarious,—if we would so use them, as, in and through the use of them, to form ourselves by God’s grace for heaven. I shall not stay to depict to-night the case which is the reverse of this, the case in which the world of little things is being, *not* used, *but* abused, day by day,—with those disastrous results of

moral decay, deterioration, and ruin, which are described in those awful words of the last chapter of the Bible, which have been read in our ears in the course of this evening's Service ;— 'He that is unjust, let him be unjust still ; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still.' It is a terrible fact, that such a downward, downward path is open to us,—nay, is easy and inviting to tread. For what does Jesus say ?—'Enter ye in at the strait gate : for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat : because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.'

To-night, however, our last thoughts may well be given to another and brighter side of the subject which has been occupying us. We have already seen that we take with us, assuredly, into that other unknown world the human affections, which make us cling to those whom we have loved here. It is simply impossible to believe, that the love which lasted up to the moment of death ceased with death ;—or that the bruised and bleeding hearts which it left behind, may look and long in vain for a renewal of the broken intercourse in a world as to which the promise is ;—'God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes ; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain : for the former things are passed away.'

Now from this fact I draw one or two inferences, the truth and force of which I am sure we shall all, at once, feel,—and which concern us all alike in that double capacity which belongs to us all ;—both as those who love and go before, and as those who love and are left behind. For it is evident, that, as surely as we have been left behind by some, who loved us and have been taken from us ; so surely shall we in our turn leave behind us some, whom we loved and were taken from.

In the prospect, then, of losing those whom we love, let me beg you to lay well to heart the sacredness of human love and the danger of trifling with it. In a little volume of Religious

Poetry (known to many of you),—entitled ‘The Changed Cross and other Religious Poems,’ you will find a very striking Poem,—headed, ‘How doth Death speak of our Beloved,’ and having these lines for its motto :—

‘The rain that falls upon the height  
Too gently to be called delight,  
In the dark valley re-appears  
As a wild cataract of tears :  
And love in life shall strive to see  
Sometimes what love in death would be.’

The poem describes with great force the change which death makes in all our thoughts about our loved ones,—how it softens and subdues all their failings ; heightens and glorifies all the beauties of their characters ; fills us with grief and self-reproach for having been so much less to them than we might have been. It ends with these lines :—

‘O Christ, our Life, foredate the work of Death,  
And do this now :—  
Thou who art Love, thus hallow our beloved,—  
Not Death, but Thou !’

Even so be it with all of us ! Do not let us wait for Death to do it :—for Death will do it roughly and harshly, after his nature and wont, with many a bitter pang of self-reproach. Let Christ do it for us now ;—teach us to love our loved ones *now* with a right true and sacred love, and to be to them *now* all that it is in us to be to them. Then when Death takes them from us,—at any rate we shall be spared the anguish of self-reproach. We shall have nothing in our experience answering to the language of the Poem from which I have already quoted.

‘It takes each failing on our part,  
And brands it in upon the heart,  
With caustic power and cruel art.  
  
The small neglect that may have pained,  
A giant stature will have gained,  
When it can never be explained.

The little service which had proved  
How tenderly we watched and loved,  
And those mute lips to glad smiles moved.'

And as those, who in their turn will bear their freight of human love, across the dark river, to the quiet shore beyond ; —and who will look back from thence, perhaps with aching heart, upon some aching hearts here,—let us do our utmost, *now*, to elevate and purify our love, and to fit it to take up its abode in that blissful region and find a fuller satisfaction of itself *there*, when the severed hearts are at last reunited. And in order that this may be so, let us see to it, that Christ has the first place in our hearts, here and now. Every other affection will fall into rank, all will be in tune,—when this is so. And has He not every right to that first and highest place ? We need not proclaim the long roll of his titles to the throne of our hearts. It is enough to cite but one. Is He not, beyond all controversy, Himself the *Highest* and therefore the most lovable ;—every moral grace, in ourselves and in those whom we love, being but the faint reflection of some archetypal grace in Him ? 'Of his fulness have we all received, and grace for grace.'

Be it so with us, dear brethren, in the coming year. So to live will be indeed to lay up treasure for ourselves in heaven. The life, which has Jesus Christ,—'Jesus Christ, the same yesterday and to-day and for ever,'—for its central heat and light and force ; the life which subordinates all other affections, aims, desires, to this one sovereign affection ;—is surely far beyond the reach of rust and moth and thief,—of all that can canker or rob or destroy. So to live is to do the will of God. And St. John says:—'The world passeth away, and the lust thereof ; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.'

## SERMON IX.

### EZEKIEL'S LAST VISION.

EZEKIEL xlviii. 35.

It was round about eighteen thousand measures : and the name of the city from that day shall be, The Lord is there.

THE last nine chapters of this Book of Ezekiel, from the fortieth to the end, form a section by themselves,—a very curious part of the Book, and in some ways a very interesting one. So far as we can judge from the dates which the writer prefixes, here and there, to the several portions of his work, this last section is much the latest of all,—quite an after-thought, as it were. It begins thus : ‘In the five-and-twentieth year of our captivity, in the beginning of the year, in the tenth day of the month, in the fourteenth year after that the city was smitten, in the selfsame day, the hand of the Lord was upon me, and brought me thither : in the visions of God brought he me into the land of Israel, and set me upon a very high mountain, by which was as the frame of a city on the south.’ The preceding nine-and-thirty chapters of the Book are spread over the years from the fifth to the twelfth of the Captivity ; *that* Captivity, which swept king and noble, priest and soldier, into exile, eleven years before the final siege and destruction of the city by the armies of Nebuchadnezzar. Of the years between the twelfth and the twenty-fifth of

Ezekiel's exile there remains, apparently, no written memorial. They were years, we may suppose, of literary silence and inactivity. The nation lay completely crushed under the heel of the Babylonian oppressor. The noblest and most heroic of her sons could only mourn in silence, whilst the iron entered into their souls.

But after some twelve or thirteen years of silence, 'the hand of the Lord,' to use his own language, was again upon Ezekiel, and he saw once more 'visions of God : ' and what he saw he has recorded in these last nine chapters of the Book which bears his name. On a first perusal this latest part of his work seems very inferior to the earlier portions of it ; hardly worthy—if we may say so—of the writer of the grand and glorious eighteenth and thirty-fourth and thirty-seventh chapters. The language of it strikes one as diffuse and tedious, the imagery over-minute and monotonous. We weary over the long-drawn, fine-spun details of measurement and sacrifice and ceremony. Yet, in spite of all this, we could ill afford to lose these chapters. Their level spaces are relieved, now and again, by some higher ground of abiding concern. Both on their own account, and on account of their relation to the work of another writer, in whom we as Christians have a much closer interest, they will well repay diligent perusal and careful study. I propose, this evening, to set down, first of all, in very few words, some of the thoughts which are suggested by the chapters, regarded under both these heads : and then I shall ask you to go on with me to study and apply the language of our text, in such ways as the opening of a new year,—a new year opening under such evil auspices, so far as the peace of the world is concerned,—may seem to require.

1. The vision of these last chapters is the vision of a city rebuilt and a temple restored. 'Again, as in his earlier days,'—so writes the author of the 'History of the Jewish Church,'—'but now with a wholly different purpose, the same Divine hand seizes the prophet, and transports him to his native

country. In the visions of God he stands on the summit of a high mountain, and there is revealed to him the mysterious plan of a city and temple, exactly corresponding to that which he had known in his youth, even down to minute details, but on a gigantic scale. And from under the temple porch he sees the perennial spring, which lay hid within the rocky vault, burst forth into a full and overflowing stream, which pours down the terraces towards the Eastern gate. The dry bed of the Kedron is filled with a mighty torrent, which rises higher and higher till it becomes a vast river ; and the rugged and sterile rocks, which line its course, break out into verdure ; and through the two deep defiles the stream divides, and forces its way into the desert plain of the Jordan, and into the lifeless waters of the Salt Sea ; and the sea of death begins to teem with living creatures, and with innumerable fish, like the Sea of Tiberias, or the Mediterranean ; and the fishermen stand all along the banks to watch the transformation ; and, according to the sight so common in Eastern countries, the life-giving water is everywhere followed by the growth of luxuriant vegetation.' 'Everything shall live whither the river cometh : '—'And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed : it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary : and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine.'

We feel ourselves transported at once by these words to the latest vision of the last of the prophets of the Bible. 'He showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month : and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.' At this, as at some other points, the imagery or symbolism of John's vision is evidently borrowed



from that of Ezekiel,—but not slavishly borrowed ; borrowed, but transformed in the borrowing. The vision of St. John is larger, freer, less minute, much less earthly, much more spiritual, than that of Ezekiel. Ezekiel's temple and city seem to be only a magnified edition of the city and temple which he had known in his youth,—which he had loved so fondly, and lost so early. The city and temple of St. John are purely ideal, symbolical. The city '*descends* out of heaven from God, having the glory of God.' Its length and its breadth and its height are all equal. Literal temple, such as Ezekiel describes, it has none. 'I saw no temple therein,' St. John writes ; 'for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the Temple of it.'

Here, then, as everywhere in the pages of the Bible, we find growth, progress : first the lower, then the higher ; first the earthly, then the heavenly ; first the natural, then the spiritual. The new fulfils the old, has its roots in the old, affiliates itself to the old ; but transcends and surpasses it. The exile of Patmos must not be *as* the exile of the river of Chebar ; yet must never forget that he is his heir, his debtor. The old thought becomes purified and elevated in its passage from thinker to thinker, from prophet to prophet. But the new does not break with the old : it enshrines it reverently in its own truer and purer symbolism. The continuity of inspiration is still upheld. The principle expounded once for all by *the* prophet of prophets, Jesus Christ, is ever maintained : 'Think not that I am come to destroy the Law, or the Prophets ; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.'

John, the exile of Patmos, *must* not be as Ezekiel the exile of Chebar : even as the exile of Chebar *could* not be as the exile of Patmos. Both the one and the other wrote as it were in view of the ruins of a destroyed temple. But the temple destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar was destined to rise again from its ruins : not so the temple destroyed by the Roman armies under Titus. In the prospect of such a literal restoration Ezekiel, the priest, might reasonably desire that the new might be as the old, only larger and more magnificent. And within

certain narrow bounds and limits at last it was so. Herod's pile was at least as stately and grand as that which Nebuchadnezzar destroyed. But all such hopes and visions would have been only an anachronism to St. John. It was well for Ezekiel to cherish them : it was impossible, it would have been folly, for John to do so. In the interval between the one and the other, the world had moved on some four hundred or five hundred years : and 'the fulness of the time' had come ; and it was possible to proclaim as the basis of a world-wide church, and the centre of a worship which should last until the end of time,—*not* some visible temple made with hands, *but* this eternal truth : 'The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth : for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit : and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.'

2. We may pass now to what is of more immediate concern to ourselves ; the thoughts suggested by the words of our text, and their connection with the New Year upon which we have so recently entered.

Ezekiel's last words, and, doubtless, they expressed his dearest hopes for the future, are these : 'The name of the city from that day shall be, The Lord is there.' However vast and splendid might be the new city and the restored temple, it was impossible for Ezekiel, true prophet and priest as he was, to be satisfied with any glory less than the highest, for the one and the other ; and that highest glory could only be the presence of God, the Eternal, the God of Israel. At this point he launches out into hopes, which not even the prophet of the New Dispensation can outdo. *His* words sound as little more than an echo of Ezekiel's : "I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them and be their God.'

We realize Ezekiel's meaning more clearly and forcibly, if we alter the very negative name, '*Lord*,' into the English word

which represents most accurately the Hebrew original,—the 'Eternal,' or the 'Changeless,' or the 'Selfsame.' The Unchangeableness of Jehovah gives the prophet hope for the city that is to be. His thought is, partly at least, that of another younger prophet: 'I am the Lord,'—Jehovah,—'I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.'

It is scarcely necessary for us to attempt to analyze Ezekiel's thought further. We may venture to adopt his words just as they stand, and apply them according to the necessities of our time and case.

Let us then gather up all our own thoughts in reference to the future,—our own future, and that of the nations around us,—in this brief phrase of Ezekiel's, as motto and watchword,—'Jehovah-shammah,'—'*The Eternal is there.*' And if such watchword smites us with a sober, solemn awe, it is well that it should be so. It is well that we should remind ourselves, not merely at the beginning of a new year, but at all times, that the Kingdom of God *is*, and *will be*, over and around us and all men, during the coming months; that we are *in* it and *under* it, as subjects and citizens of it; and that this Kingdom is the Kingdom of the Eternal, the Unchangeable, the Selfsame,—'the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.'

Let us apply this thought, first of all, to the events which seem to be hastening to a crisis in the East. The last word has not yet been spoken. It will be spoken, they tell us, to-morrow. Peace and war hang upon it; and if it be war, who can tell what new complications may arise in the course of it, or to what extent the political map of the world may be altered, before *that* is ended, which to-morrow may begin? At a moment of suspense like this, when even speculation itself is paralyzed before the tremendous possibilities of the future, it is *something*, it is *much*, to remind ourselves that the most solid and certain fact of 'all is, *the Kingdom of God, and its ultimate triumph.*' The Psalmist's language suits us well at such a

moment : 'The Eternal reigneth ; let the earth rejoice ; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof. Clouds and darkness are round about him ; righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.' Yes, 'Clouds and darkness are round about him : ' or, as another psalmist expresses it, 'Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known.' We dare not forecast his movements, or predict the exact modes in which his Kingdom will assert itself. But, 'Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne,'—more exactly, 'Are the pillar of his throne : '—his Kingdom rests upon them : the forces of it, omnipotent as they are, are ever wielded in righteousness, and by righteousness, and with a view to the ultimate triumph of righteousness. Here, and only here, *might* and *right* are always one.

Whatever to-morrow or the next day may bring forth, it seems almost impossible that the mass of complicated political questions, commonly described as 'The Eastern Question,' can ever get itself permanently settled without the application, sooner or later, of the rough and terrible tool of war. It *may* not come in *our* time. *We* may be spared the horrible yet fascinating interest of another great European war. But if come it must, and come in our day, it will not be amiss to remind ourselves, that even war,—cruel, destructive, and terrible as it is,—is no mere scourge and curse of the human race. Like the tornadoes and hurricanes of the physical world, it is often made to minister to some beneficent purpose. As the seven seals of the book of the Divine Will were one by one opened, the very first vision that met the eye of John was one of war and conquest. 'When the Lamb opened one of the seals,' the first, 'I saw, and behold a white horse,' the conqueror's mark, 'and he that sat on him had a bow ; and a crown was given unto him : and he went forth conquering and to conquer.' It is astonishing to reflect what war has done for the world since history began. If it has inflicted untold miseries, it has also conferred untold benefits. Even within our own short experience

it has extinguished slavery in the Southern States of North America; and it has given to Europe a united Italy and a united Germany,—results, big with promise, not merely for those nations themselves, but for the great commonwealth of the nations of the world. If this dread weapon of the Divine armoury should be in store for the world again, to be produced, refurbished and ready, ere many weeks or months or years be past, God grant that it may bring healing eventually in its train,—healing for old and festering wounds of oppressed nations,—healing of strife and discord between race and race,—liberty for the slave,—justice for all!

We must pass away now from these large speculations to the little field of our own petty lives, and think what the watchword of our text,—‘Jehovah-shammah,’ ‘The Eternal is there,’—should mean for *us*.

Once, in the wilderness, under the leadership of Moses, the Israelites asked, in a season of weariness and cowardice, and of atheistic doubt, such as springs out of weariness and cowardice and feeds them, ‘Is the Lord,’ is the Eternal, ‘among us or no?’ In after years, just before he was taken from them by death, their great leader recurred to that question of theirs, and bade them beware of tempting the Lord again so. ‘Ye shall not tempt the Eternal your God, as ye tempted him at Massah.’ We will welcome the lesson for ourselves to-night, dear brethren. Be the individual future of each one of us what it may, at any rate of *this* we may be sure, *The Eternal will be there*. He will be with us in it. ‘God’s kingdom ours abideth,’ come what may. We cannot be taken out of its reach.

Now this thought admits of many applications. It must ever be a thought of solemn awe. But in that awe terror may predominate, or comfort and peace and joy, according as we will have it. Guilty Jacob, wakening out of his solitary sleep, and saying to himself, ‘Surely the Eternal is in this place, and I knew it not,’—is afraid, and cries, ‘How dreadful is this place!

this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.' Moses, on the contrary, true servant and lover of God that he was, cannot bear the prospect of a life in which the Eternal is not, everywhere and at every moment, *present*: 'If thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence.' The way in which the conscience shrinks from, or welcomes, the thought of the presence of God, is ever an unerring test of the state of the conscience,—that is, of the man, whose conscience or inmost consciousness it is. A truth *this*, which is taught us almost on the first page of the Bible; where, in the world-famous allegory, the guilt-laden pair are represented as hiding themselves from the presence of the Lord God,—though hiding themselves in vain,—amongst the trees of the garden.

Let us, then, settle it well in our minds, dear brethren, that, whether we will or no, all through the coming months of the new year, be they few or many or all, that we shall live to see, the Eternal will be there; and we shall be ever face to face with Him. Nothing can alter this. The laws of his Kingdom will be ever around us,—correcting, chastising, avenging themselves upon us, when we go astray and break or transgress them. There is no trifling with those terrible laws of his. They are inexorable. But far beyond this, and infinitely better than this, He Himself will be there: *there*, as the Eternal and the Changeless One; *there*, too, as the *Father*, correcting us for our profit, educating us for glory.

Nothing, I repeat, can alter this solemn fact. But the feelings with which we recognize and accept the fact, admit of indefinite alteration,—of every shade of variety, from the terror-stricken repulsion which would fain *ignore*, since it cannot *deny* it, to the earnest, serious, sober, thankful welcoming, whose language is, 'Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.' It remains for each one of us to decide what it shall be in his own case; whether we will so order our lives, as to welcome, heart and soul, the inevitable Presence, and rejoice in it; or whether we will, with unspeakable folly, make believe that there is no such Divine

Presence with us ; until at last all our vain concealments are torn from us, and we *hear* and *must* obey the voice which drags us forth—' *Where art thou ?* '

But my last words to-night must not, and shall not, be words of fear. There will certainly be those amongst us to-night, who look forward with trepidation and anxiety to their unknown future, wondering what troubles and trials the new year may bring, as the old has brought before,—longing to serve God, and to serve Him better than they have yet done. To relieve the anxieties of such, to allay their trepidation, and to help them to look bravely and hopefully and cheerfully forwards into the future : *this* is certainly part of a Christian pastor's duty, and a most welcome part. *This* duty it is not difficult to discharge. Passages of Holy Scripture crowd upon us, which are full of hope and comfort for those to whom the thought of the Divine Presence is truly dear. Let me give you one, and only one, which is, after all, but an expansion of the ' Jehovah-shammah ' of our text : ' But now, thus saith the Eternal that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, *Fear not* : when thou passest through the waters I will be with thee ; and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee ; when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee : fear not, for I am with thee. '

And with this promise let us ever couple the Psalmist's prayer—prayer wrung from his heart by the constraining awe of this Presence, which can neither be put by nor shaken off : ' Search me, O God, and try the ground of my heart ; prove me, and examine my thoughts : look well if there be any way of wickedness in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. ' Thus armed,—armed with promise and with prayer,—we would go, resolutely and courageously, forth into the future.

## SERMON X.

### THE SACRAMENTS.

2 TIM. i. 9, 10.

According to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began ; but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

1 PETER i. 20.

Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you.

IN the course of a controversy, which is still hot in the columns of the *Times*, between Canon Liddon on one side and a distinguished ecclesiastic of the Romish Communion on the other, it was said by the former :—‘No proposition avails to define the relation of the sacramental gifts to the consecrated elements of the Holy Communion.’ In these words a point is incidentally touched,—a point of the utmost importance,—the key to many a mystery of the Kingdom of God. To develope it,—to show its numerous ramifications and applications ;—*this* is my task to-night. I invite you, dear brethren, to a thoughtful and attentive fellowship with me in it. If I may but handle it as I hope to be enabled to do, it will not be beyond the grasp of any of you.

The writer of the words is dealing with a troublesome and annoying fact,—a fact of the same troublesome and annoying



kind as that with which Dr. Newman in a recent publication has to deal,—namely, the folly and extravagance of men, whom he cannot defend, yet cannot disown. He offers, if I do not misunderstand him, a half-apology for them in the statement :— ‘No proposition avails to define the relation of the sacramental gifts to the consecrated elements of the Holy Communion.’

Now, the question which arises to my own mind here, is this :— The words assume that there exists a certain relation between ‘the sacramental gifts’ and ‘the consecrated elements,’ though no proposition, no formal statement, avails to define that relation. But is this a right and true way of putting the matter? Are we justified in detaching the elements,—the water of holy baptism, the bread and wine of the Lord’s Supper,—from the sign, the outward and visible sign, taken as a whole, and in regarding them as standing in some independent relation of their own to what Canon Liddon calls ‘the sacramental gifts’? Is there any such relation at all between the ‘elements’ taken by themselves, and the ‘gifts’?

The assumption that there is such a relation lies at the root of those extreme views on the subject of the Sacraments which prevail now so widely in our Church ; and which, in the case of the Holy Communion, seem to be indistinguishable from the Romish doctrine of Transubstantiation ;—extreme views, which claim for themselves the title of ‘high views,’ but which seem to me, by comparison with the grandeur of the thing itself, unutterably unworthy and low. Out of such views spring a most superstitious and really idolatrous use, or rather abuse, of the Lord’s Supper ; a prominence given, an importance attached, to mechanical details, which true reverence would suppress and keep as much as possible out of sight ; an imperious insistence upon ‘fasting communions,’ accompanied even by calculations of the time which must elapse before the digestion is ready for ordinary food ; in fact, a whole world of observances, ceremonies, and notions, which a healthy and reverent mind rejects with disdain, with disgust, with utter

amazement that in the Christian Church of the nineteenth century such things should be possible. As one thinks of them, it seems as if Christ had said in vain :—‘ It is the spirit that quickeneth ; the flesh profiteth nothing : the words that I speak unto you, they are *spirit* and they are *life*.’

From all these sickly speculations and practices we turn with glad and thankful alacrity to those old formularies of our Church, in which we shall discover a far more excellent way. And, first of all, guided by them, we find ourselves compelled to substitute for Canon Liddon’s ‘consecrated elements’ and ‘sacramental gifts,’ the ‘outward visible sign’ and the ‘inward spiritual grace’ of our familiar Church Catechism. In the next place, instead of looking for a relation between the sacramental gifts and the consecrated elements taken by themselves, we shall look for a relation between the ‘inward spiritual grace’ and the ‘outward visible sign’ taken as a whole. In the third place, we shall distinctly and emphatically repudiate the substitution of the unauthorised word ‘gifts’ for the authorised word ‘grace,’ along with the substitution of the word ‘sacramental’ for the word ‘spiritual.’ And lastly, whilst taking all care to give full weight to the significance of the elements employed,—whether it be the water of baptism, or the bread and wine of the Lord’s Supper,—we shall take equal care to subordinate the ‘element’ to the ‘outward visible sign’ regarded as a whole, and to see that it takes its due place, and only its due place, therein.

The illustrations which I shall proceed to give will, I hope, make my meaning perfectly clear. But, before giving them, I wish to make one remark upon the importance of the subject. Extravagant views in one direction always tend to produce a reaction in the other. An unseemly glorification of the sacraments on one side is accompanied by an equally unseemly depreciation of them on another. For my own part, as long as I believe that Christ said, ‘This do in remembrance of me ;’ as long as I believe that Christ sent his apostles

to preach the gospel to every creature, and to baptize all who received that gospel,—and *this* I shall believe, as long as I believe any fact of past history whatever,—I shall hold the sacraments in the deepest reverence ; and I shall count it not the smallest part of my duty and privilege, as a minister of his gospel, to be a faithful dispenser of them. Even if I could not see one atom of the meaning and the glory of them, I should still think that the Commander-in-Chief knew what He was about, and that it was enough for me, as a very subordinate officer in his army, to obey orders. As it is, I am not left in the difficult position of having to obey orders, which I can neither understand nor justify. On the contrary, every year that I live, I see increasing reason to admire and adore the wisdom which, out of the simple, universal elements of water, bread, and wine, could construct two ordinances, so rich in meaning,—witnesses, so mighty, to the abounding grace of God,—signs, so effectual, of the goodwill of our Heavenly Father towards us.

To proceed: the question of the Catechism, ‘What is the outward visible sign or form in baptism?’ is followed by the answer, ‘Water ; wherein the person is baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost ;’—that is, not ‘water’ only and by itself, but water applied to the person who is to be baptized, with certain words. So long as the water stands by itself, unused, unapplied, there is no sacrament. It becomes sacramental, only when it is brought in contact with the person, whether infant or adult, who is to be baptized ; and when that contact of the water with the person is accompanied by the words, ‘I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.’ This *act* of applying water with these words to the person who is to be baptized—this *act*, I say, or *action*, constitutes the outward visible sign or form in baptism.

In the view of our own Church, nothing turns upon, no importance is to be attached to, the quantity of water employed. We hold it to be matter of perfect indifference, whether the

whole body is immersed in the water, or whether water is merely poured or sprinkled upon it. He 'shall dip the child in the water;' 'it shall suffice to pour water upon it;' 'he shall dip him in the water, or pour water upon him:' these are the directions of the Prayer Book for the guidance of the officiating minister in the public baptism of infants and of adults. Which method shall be adopted, whether immersion or affusion, is left to the discretion, not of the minister, but of the parents, in the one case; of the adult himself, in the other. There is something to be said on behalf of each. In the case of immersion the symbolism is more expressive. It represents more vividly what St. Paul calls the baptism into the death of Christ,—the death unto sin, and the new birth unto righteousness. On the other hand, it tends to make the mechanical details too prominent, and by so doing to distract the attention from the spiritual significance. To my own way of thinking, the sacrament is never so impressive as when it is administered with but a drop of water, falling gently, without awakening, upon some sleeping baby's face. The mechanical details are then reduced to a minimum; and we are brought, without any disturbance of thought, into the presence of the heavenly mystery.

And what *is* this heavenly mystery? Notice, first of all, the answer of the Catechism to the question, 'What is the inward and spiritual grace?' 'A death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness: for being by nature born in sin, and the children of wrath, we are hereby made the children of grace.' I do not think I shall be doing you any injustice, if I suggest the possibility of your mistaking the meaning of these words. In the first place, there are likely enough to be those amongst us, who will take fright at the words, 'being by nature born in sin, and the children of wrath,' and who will go off in high disdain thereat; not seeing that the words merely describe an undeniable fact; namely, that we come into the world with an unquestionable predisposition to, and capacity for, moral evil; and that, so far as this is the case, we are necessarily children of wrath, under

the displeasure of Him who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. In the second place, there are likely enough to be others amongst us, who will misunderstand the word 'hereby,' and will, in fact, read it as if it were 'thereby.' Of course, the moment we think of it, we shall see our mistake. The word 'thereby' would refer us to the outward and visible sign, the nature of which we have just discussed. The word 'hereby' can only refer us to 'the inward and spiritual grace,' the nature of which we have still to discuss. It is not the outward action, already explained, that makes us 'the children of grace.' You do not bring your babes to the font 'children of wrath,' and take them away 'children of grace.' That which makes us 'the children of grace' is the 'death unto sin, and the new birth unto righteousness.' At this moment, every one of us is both child of wrath and child of grace. Child of wrath, in so far as we yield ourselves to the power of sin and do iniquity; child of grace, in so far as we count ourselves dead to sin and alive to God, and therefore refuse to let sin reign in our mortal body, that we should obey it in the lusts thereof.

Both child of wrath and child of grace, I repeat; but, in either case, *children*,—children of God. I appeal to the parents who are present to interpret the paradox, if paradox it be. Is there no parental displeasure—is there no *wrath*, if need be,—for their children, when they go wrong, disobey their parents' commands, frustrate their parents' wishes, reject their parents' advice? And is there no such a thing as an emotion of pleasure, satisfaction, and delight in the parental heart, when the children do right; are obedient, affectionate, docile? Yet the children, in either case, are *children*. So, too, in the parable, the son in the far off country, hungry and desolate and miserable, was still a *son*; though conscience compelled him to say, 'I will arise, and go to my father; and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.'

The work of grace consists in the gradual conversion or transformation of the undisciplined child of wrath into the dis-

ciplined, chastened, and humbled child of grace. It is a tedious work ; it is a painful work. Again and again we kick against the pricks,—the goad of the stern but merciful Driver,—only to find that He is too strong for us, and that freedom and peace can only come through submission of our wills to His. That was no narrow Jewish, but a wide human experience, which the prophet of Israel depicts thus :—‘ I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself : Thou hast chastised me ; and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke : turn thou me, and I shall be turned ; for thou art the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented ; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh : I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth. Is Ephraim my dear son ? Is he a beloved child ? For since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still : therefore my heart is troubled for him ; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord.’

What do we gather from all this ? We gather, that, *just as* the outward visible sign or form in baptism is an act or action ; namely, the application of water to the person who is to be baptized, accompanied by the utterance of certain words ; *so*, also, the inward and spiritual grace is an act or action or acting of the Divine Spirit and Will, not instantaneous (as is the outward sign), but prolonged through the whole period of life, and having for its object to bring us into a state, in which we shall be truly dead to sin and alive only to righteousness and to God. The outward act ‘representeth’ to us the Divine Will and Acting, for us and upon us, and, along with this, our own ‘profession, which is’ (to use the inimitable words of our Prayer Book) ‘to follow the example of our Saviour Christ, and to be made like unto Him ; that, as He died and rose again for us, so should we, who are baptized, die from sin, and rise again unto righteousness ; continually mortifying all our evil and corrupt affections, and daily proceeding in all virtue and godliness of living.’

We may give still greater precision and clearness to our

thoughts upon this important subject by the study of another passage in our Prayer Book ; one, over which I suspect we are often inclined to glide, not feeling sure whither it may lead us, and what it may involve us in. For, indeed, there are two dangers which are constantly besetting us in this whole region of religious truth : *one*, the indolence which shrinks from the trouble of patient thought, or a timidity which apprehends inconvenient and unpleasant results from it ; the *other*, the craving for exact definitions on subjects which do not admit of them. It is very hard to learn that we must be content to cut as deep as we can into these subjects, in which the Divine and the human, the Infinite and the finite, the Eternal and the temporal, come in contact with one another ; and yet to confess the existence of a vast encircling ocean of mystery, which our definitions are as powerless to measure, as the hollow of the hand is powerless to measure the waters of the sea.

The passage to which I refer is to be found in the second prayer of the office for the Public Baptism of Infants. The words are these : ' We call upon thee for this infant, that he, coming to thy holy baptism, may receive remission of his sins by spiritual regeneration : ' ' That this infant may enjoy the everlasting benediction of thy heavenly washing. ' ' *May receive remission of his sins.* ' What sins ? Sins actually committed by the child ? Nay, but the child is supposed to be a baby in arms, not yet a moral agent ; incapable, therefore, of committing actual transgressions ; having no sins, in this sense, to be remitted. Is it, then, '*original sin*'—that which our IXth Article so admirably defines as ' the fault and the corruption of the nature of every man, ' whereby he ' is of his own nature inclined to evil ' ? Nay, but this ' infection of nature, ' the Article adds, ' doth remain, yea, in them that are regenerated. ' Is it, then, some supposed guilt, attaching to the child in virtue of its descent from the first transgressor ? Nay, but there can be no guilt where there is no responsibility. We inherit, it is true, an infected nature ; and the sins of the fathers, in this as

in other ways, are visited upon the children, by a law which I believe to be as really merciful as it is manifestly terrible. But we are in no sense responsible for those sins; no guilt attaches to us on account of them. What *are* these sins, then? And what *is* that 'remission' of them, which is to be by 'spiritual regeneration'? The answer is not far to seek. The prayer is not retrospective. It is prospective. It is looking on into the future, when the shadows will darken on the path of the growing boy and the grown man; and the cry of the stricken conscience will be, not for mere withdrawal of penalties, but for an actual remission or release from sins. And how is this to be? How but by the introduction of the germ of a new life—spiritual regeneration—the death of sin, gradually swallowed up by 'the power of an endless life'? Yes, believe it, brethren, those few drops of water upon that infant face are the visible pledge and seal of a Fatherly love and righteousness which shall go with your child, year after year, till the years of life are over,—to correct, to chastise, to heal, to cleanse,—the everlasting benediction of a Divine or heavenly washing.

Further illustration we have not time to seek to-night. Neither have we time to enlarge the discussion, so as to take in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, as well as the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. In the simpler and less complex sacrament you will easily trace the lineaments of the other. Or, if not, possibly on some future occasion I may be enabled to help you to trace them. To-night it must suffice to return for a few moments to the point from which we started, and to show what light is thrown upon it by the investigation which we have been conducting.

Our starting-point was the words: 'No proposition avails to define the relation of the sacramental gifts to the consecrated elements of the Holy Communion.' We have found ourselves compelled to substitute, for 'sacramental gifts' 'inward grace,' and for 'consecrated elements' 'outward sign.' And then the words will read thus: 'No proposition avails to define the



relation of the inward and spiritual grace of the sacraments to their outward and visible sign.' Now, in this amended form, we can give our hearty assent to the words. We dare not do, what so many seem to us to do,—we dare not tie down the spiritual grace to the outward sign, in such way as to make the former dependent upon the latter, or to make the former cotemporaneous with the latter. That which expresses itself,—that which embodies itself, momentarily,—in the outward and visible sign, is, we believe, the Eternal Will of God; a Will, ever gracious, ever good, ever wise, ever just. We accept the outward sign joyfully and thankfully, as a pledge and seal of that Will as a Will for *ourselves*; visible pledge and outward seal, mercifully conceded to our poor human weakness and infirmity. But we dare not attempt to define the point of contact between the Invisible and the visible, the Eternal and the temporal; or to say, 'It is just this, and no more than this;'*—a bare sign, nothing else,—which we may therefore safely neglect. If we must have words on such a subject, I should be well content for my own part to leave the whole matter in the language of our XXVth Article:—*'Sacraments ordained of Christ be not only badges or tokens of Christian men's profession, but rather they be certain sure witnesses and effectual signs of grace, and God's goodwill towards us, by the which he doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken, but also strengthen and confirm our faith in him.'

The sacraments of the Christian Church rest upon *that* which is the Sacrament of sacraments, namely, the Incarnation, the life, the death, the resurrection of the Son of God. All these constitute together God's great Sacrament of Himself; the outward and visible sign of his Eternal Grace and Righteousness; sign, most *effectual*;—sign, which is indeed *power*, as well as sign,—the 'power of God unto salvation.' *Here*, too, as in those lesser luminaries which are but satellites of this, we encounter the same and still greater difficulty, the moment we attempt to define the relation between the invisible grace and

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the visible form which it was pleased to assume. Atonement, redemption, justification, propitiation, satisfaction,—all these and other kindred words do but represent the attempts which we find ourselves constrained, time after time to make, and time after time to revise and remake, towards defining the Indefinable,—towards comprehending the Incomprehensible. Ever and again there come moments, when, oppressed with the vastness of the mystery, we take refuge in such language as that of our text, which seems to say all that *can* be said :—‘ His own purpose and grace, given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ : ’ ‘ Foreordained before the foundation of the world, but manifested in these last times.’

## SERMON XI.

### THE SACRAMENTS.

JOHN vi. 63.

It is the Spirit that quickeneth ; the flesh profiteth nothing : the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.

OWING to a slight misprint in the newspaper from which I copied the words,—the change of the letter ‘e’ into the letter ‘o,’—I find that I did more than justice to the language which I took as the starting-point of my sermon on Sunday evening last. Instead of, ‘No *proposition* avails,’ it ought to have been, ‘No *preposition* avails to define the relation of the sacramental gifts to the consecrated elements of the Holy Communion.’ In this corrected form, I confess, the words cease to have any interest for me whatever. They look to me like a piece of solemn trifling with a most serious and sacred subject.

I dismiss the *words*, then, altogether from our consideration. But I would resume the subject to-night, in the hope of being enabled so to deal with it as to carry your thoughts along with me, whilst I give to the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper the same kind of examination which we gave on Sunday evening last to the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. Would to God that I might so speak as to induce many to come to that Holy Table who have hitherto neglected it ; and many others to convert an

irregular and intermittent attendance into a regular, frequent, and thoughtful use of a means of grace, for which we have the express warrant and command of Christ Himself:—‘This *do*, in remembrance of me.’

I tried to show you, a week ago, that the outward and visible sign in the Sacrament of Baptism is not merely a thing or element,—*water*; but the application of that element of water,—in any quantity, however minute or however copious, along with the utterance of certain words,—to the body of the person, whether child or adult, who is to be baptized. In other words, the outward and visible sign is not a *thing*, but an *act* or *action*: an act or action, in which the thing, water, is used, in order to give a particular expression or meaning to the action.

Similarly, the inward and spiritual grace, which corresponds to the outward and visible sign, is, *not* a thing, *but* an act or action or acting; an acting of *God*, which is related to, or bears a certain relation to, the human *soul* or *spirit* or *will*, just as the action of putting water upon the child or adult is related to the *body* of the person baptized. The element of water gives definiteness to the nature of this Divine acting; helps us to understand what it is. Everywhere, in all countries, water is the instrument of cleansing. In that sultry eastern clime, which was the cradle of the Gospel and of the Christian Church, water was, and is, something more than the instrument of cleansing. It was the symbol of all that was refreshing and life-giving. The Bible is full of passages illustrative of this. Take, for example, from the Old Testament, this:—‘O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee; my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee, in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is.’ And from the New Testament it would suffice to take the words which we have just been reading as part of the second lesson for this evening’s service:—‘He showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.’ To which we may add from the second lesson of this morning’s service, this:—‘I will give

unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.'

Life, healing, cleansing,—all these are suggested to our thoughts by the precious and most wonderful element of water. The application of it in Holy Baptism tells us of a Divine acting and will,—whose nature it is, whose purpose it is, to cleanse, to heal, to give life. The adults who come of their own free will, but as in duty bound, to Holy Baptism; the parents who come, with their babes in their arms, to the Sacred Font; come to claim, for themselves in the first case, for their little ones in the second, the blessed operation of that saving grace of God, the everlasting benediction of his heavenly washing, the merciful and loving embrace of the Heavenly Father. And *this*, which they thus come to claim, the Sacrament of Holy Baptism testifies to be waiting for them. We may well say,—as our Prayer Book bids us say,—‘Doubt ye not, therefore, but earnestly believe, that he will favourably receive this present infant; that he will embrace him with the arms of his mercy; that he will give unto him the blessing of eternal life, and make him partaker of his everlasting kingdom.’

We can pass now, with sufficient preparation of thought, to the study of the more complex Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. And here, again, as before, we will start from the old familiar words of the Church Catechism. The question is asked,—‘What is the outward part or sign of the Lord's Supper?’ And the answer is,—‘Bread and wine, which the Lord hath commanded to be received.’ That is to say, not *bread* and *wine* merely, but bread and wine *received* according to our Lord's command. There is no ‘outward and visible sign’ without the *reception* of the bread and wine, in obedience to the command, ‘Take, eat,’—‘Drink ye all of it.’ In other words, *here* also, as in the case of the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, the outward and visible sign is not a *thing*, or *element*, merely, but is an act, or action,—the action of *receiving* the elements of

bread and wine, in compliance with the Lord's dying command,—‘*This do.*’

Now, there can be no *receiving* without a *giving*. The terms are correlative. If I am to *receive* something, there must be some one to *give* that something to me. In the case of Holy Baptism, nothing turns upon the qualifications or official position of the person who administers the rite. The Church of England recognizes the validity of Lay Baptism; though, as a point of ecclesiastical order, it is of course objectionable. But there is no such thing as the Lay administration of the Lord's Supper. According to the *rules*—which are also *laws*—of the Church of England, only a clergyman in full orders can celebrate the Holy Communion. In order to put its full significance into the outward and visible sign here, it is of great importance to emphasize the act of *giving*. There is not to be merely a *taking*; there is to be a *giving* and a *receiving*. The appointed minister must *deliver*—(*that* is the Prayer Book word)—the bread and the cup to those who come to receive them from his hand.

The outward and visible sign is surely beginning to grow beneath our thoughts into its full and perfect meaning. There is the *giver*, and there are the *receivers*; and that which is given and received is bread and wine, previously consecrated by the laying on of hands and prayer. The receivers kneel to receive these consecrated elements from the hand of him who delivers them to them. This is the ‘outward part,’—that which we actually *see* with our eyes every time that the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is administered. And it is a ‘*sign*.’

A sign of *what*? Behind the visible giver, the mere earthly minister, we ought to see by the eye of faith the invisible and heavenly Giver,—the most bountiful God and Father of the spirits of men. And in each visible receiver we ought to see an immortal soul, dependent,—absolutely dependent,—for every good and perfect gift upon the bounty of that unseen Father. And in the act of giving, we ought to see the willingness,—and much more than willingness, the intense desire,—of that all-

bountiful Giver to bestow all good things upon his suppliant creatures and children. And in the act of receiving, and receiving upon our knees, we ought to see what is the right and true spiritual attitude of us, his children, towards Him, our Father in heaven ; the sense of utter dependence, unworthiness, ill-desert ; and, along with this, the hunger and the thirst, of which it is written : ‘Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness : for they shall be filled :’ ‘If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.’

Before I pass on, let me beg you to reflect upon the familiar phrases, ‘The Lord’s *Supper*,’ ‘The Lord’s *Table*,’ ‘God’s *Board*,’—as some of our Reformers, I believe, used to delight to call it ; and upon such words of our Prayer Book as these : ‘Dearly beloved brethren, on such a day I intend, by God’s grace, to celebrate the Lord’s Supper : unto which, in God’s behalf, I bid you all that are here present ; and beseech you, for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake, that ye will not refuse to come thereto, being so lovingly called and bidden by God Himself.’

In what has been now said, we have already traced out the great features and lines of this grand ordinance. But we have still to fill in the details. We have to consider how far the elements of bread and wine, which are employed in the Sacrament, help us to define and to realize the nature of this giving and this receiving, which we have already considered. The questions and answers of our Catechism, which bear upon this point, are, as you will all remember, these :—‘What is the inward part, or thing signified? The Body and Blood of Christ, which are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord’s Supper.—What are the benefits whereof we are partakers thereby? The strengthening and refreshing of our souls by the Body and Blood of Christ, as our bodies are by the bread and wine.’

The bread and the wine are consecrated for the administration of the Lord’s Supper, just as the water in the font is consecrated for the administration of Holy Baptism. ‘Sanctify this

water to the mystical washing away of sin.' So we are directed to pray, before we apply that water with the words: 'I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.' No one would dream of suggesting that the water is changed into anything, or comes to be anything but water, after the prayer of consecration has been said over it. It is evident, that it is simply dedicated to the holy use of serving to symbolize the saving, cleansing, quickening grace of God. And in the same way, at the Lord's Table, what is the use of attempting to sophisticate our minds into the notion that the bread and wine come to be something more and other than bread and wine, when the ministering priest has consecrated them to their holy function by the imposition of hands and prayer? To taste and touch they are still bread and wine, *after* consecration, as *before*. But there is this difference. By the act of consecration they are withdrawn from all profane and common uses, and are dedicated to the one service of symbolizing things unseen and eternal. Thenceforth, like the water in Holy Baptism, they can never revert to any common or vulgar use again. What remains over and above, when their consecrated office is fulfilled, must be disposed of in the most reverent manner, in the full recollection of the sacredness of the function which they have discharged.

And what is that function? It is to symbolize, or represent, the Body and Blood of Christ. At this point we are often tempted to cease to think, and to imagine that we have reached the final result of all thinking. Yet, surely, if we had been present at that Last Supper, and had heard Him say, 'This is my body,' 'This is my blood,' we should still have needed to ask, 'O Lord, what *is* that *body*, what *is* that *blood*, of Thine, of which Thou sayest: "*This* is my body which is given for you;" "*This* is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many"?'

The difficulty presented to our thoughts, when we come seriously to study the deeper meanings of the Lord's Supper,



consists in this: That the bread and wine are only secondary symbols,—symbols of symbols,—symbols of the body and the blood of Christ; which, again, are symbols of something higher, deeper, more spiritual still. And what is *that*? I do not care to define it very closely. It is better to leave it, in all its mystery, to the digestive, assimilating powers of Christian meditation, adoration, aspiration. It seems to me to include everything which comes to us through the incarnation, death, and resurrection of the Son of God,—everything which can minister to the strengthening and refreshing of our souls,—all that is implied in the gift of Christ, to be the Saviour of the world. I should study it in the light of such words of Holy Writ as these: ‘He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?’ ‘This is the record; that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.’

The Lord’s Supper testifies to the willingness,—yea, rather, as I said before, to the earnest desire of God our Heavenly Father,—to bestow this most excellent gift of eternal life upon us. And, as we kneel at the Lord’s Table, we profess our need of that life,—our hunger and thirst for it. Yes,—*eternal life!* life of the highest, Divinest quality; life, such as we see manifested in Jesus,—most pure, most gentle, most tender, most just and true; life, that has such potency and virtue in it, that it can swallow up our death, and make us alive indeed to righteousness and God. Is not this what we want, and know that we want, as soon as our eyes are opened to take something like true measure of our spiritual need? For must we not sorrowfully confess and pray with the Psalmist?—‘My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken thou me, O Lord, according to thy word.’

Now, this willingness,—or, rather, once more, this earnest desire,—of God our Father to bestow such eternal life upon his children is not a changing or variable or occasional thing. It is part of his Eternal Will and Purpose. It incarnates itself,

it embodies itself visibly and tangibly, from time to time, in the Holy Communion ; but it is itself constant, unchangeable,—the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever. The Lord's Supper is its most significant and expressive point of occasional, visible contact with our lives. And, as such a point of visible contact between the Eternal and the temporal, the Infinite and the finite, it is full of mystery, full of awe,—indefinable, incomprehensible. When we have said all that we know how to say, there remains, we cannot tell how much, still unspoken, unthought. But that which remains thus unspoken, and even unthought and unthinkable, is not carnal, but spiritual ; savours not of superstition, but of truest worship ; has nothing to do with relations between sacramental gifts and consecrated elements, which prepositions may or may not define ; but has to do with the eternal, invisible relations between our human spirits and Him whose offspring we are. Woe to us, if we attempt to despiritualise these relations by interposing between us and Him any pretended link, which, through being carnal in its conception, shall prove no link, but rather barrier and obstacle to that fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ, to which we are called !

I turn back, once more, before I conclude, to the words of institution : 'This is my body ;' 'This is my blood.' It is impossible to unravel all the complications of those last days of our Lord's earthly life, or to explain precisely in what sense He ate the Passover with his disciples on the Thursday, yet was Himself slain as the true Paschal Lamb on the Friday. But, unquestionably, in the feelings and convictions of his disciples, that Last Supper was indelibly connected with the Paschal Feast ; and the new ordinance then instituted was always understood to be the successor and heir of that Paschal Festival in the New Dispensation or Covenant or Testament, which his death and resurrection were to inaugurate. The old Festival was to wither away, because He was going to transfer Himself, with all his life and power and healing virtue, to the new. 'With desire

I have desired,'—so He addressed them, as He took his place with them at the Table,—‘to eat this Passover with you before I suffer: for I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof until it be fulfilled in the Kingdom of God.’ That is to say, interpreting the words by what followed, the Lord’s Supper is the fulfilment of the Jewish Passover in the Kingdom of God. It is the *substance*, of which that was the *shadow*. For the Paschal Lamb and the Paschal Cup, we have now the Bread and the Wine of the Lord’s Table. The bread and the wine carry our thoughts at once to Him, our true Passover, by whose death and resurrection God has wrought out his great spiritual redemption for us; just as the annual Paschal lamb, slain and eaten, carried back the thoughts of the Israelite to the emancipation of his forefathers from their bondage in Egypt. The Jewish Passover was the pledge of the national covenant and of the national unity. The Lord’s Supper is the pledge of God’s Fatherly covenant of adoption of us in Christ, and of our union as one great Family and Household under Him.

Such thoughts as these will help your meditations on the words: ‘This is my body which is given for you;’ ‘This cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you.’ But I want them now for a very practical purpose. I *do* want you to understand that we meet at the Lord’s Table, not only as those who individually are the children of God, and who are invited by Him to that Table, to pour out their hearts with all their sorrows, wants, trials, temptations, into his sympathising ear there; but also as members of one family, bound to bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. There are those amongst us, I believe, who value much all that centres in the thoughts of the one Father in heaven and the one human family on earth, but who yet seldom, if ever, come to the Lord’s Table. If there are such here to-night, I would beg them to consider why it is that they are guilty of this neglect.

In these days, certainly, people are sorely tempted to oscillate between the extremes of superstitious use and flagrant

neglect. Yet why should it be so? There is surely a way open to us which is at once most rational and most reverent; most *rational*, because full of clear light upon the Will of God, and our relation to Him and to those around us,—most *reverent*, because, in proportion as this true light finds its way into our souls, it subdues them into worship, adoration, and love. Oh, for more of that light! both for myself and for you, dear brethren. Once more, let the old Psalmist of Israel guide our prayers:—‘Oh, send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me: let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacle.’

## SERMON XII.

### SACRIFICE AND ITS REWARD.

MATTHEW xix. 30, and xx. 1.

But many that are first shall be last ; and the last shall be first. For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard.

THE two verses which I have just read as my text are the point of junction,—the meeting point,—of the Gospel for Thursday last, the Festival of the Conversion of St. Paul, and of the Gospel for to-day, Septuagesima Sunday. The word '*for*,' which unites the two verses, shows how inseparable the two passages are, each from the other. And this is still further shown by the last verse of the second of the two passages,—the Gospel for to-day ; which indeed takes up and repeats the burden of the first : ' So the last shall be first, and the first last.'

But, indeed, quite apart from any question of inter-dependence of word or phrase, it is impossible to read the whole passage through from xix. 16, to xx. 16, without feeling that we shall never be able to understand the parable of the twentieth chapter, until we have come to some understanding of the closing verses of the nineteenth chapter. Our task to-night must be : *first*, to put ourselves at the right point of view for understanding the parable which occupies the first sixteen verses of the twentieth chapter ; *next*, to appreciate the salient features and most

important lessons of that parable ; *lastly*, to apply those lessons to ourselves. And may God help us to do this ! For the task, in very deed and truth, is no slight one. Here, if anywhere, does the great Teacher speak, above his ordinary wont, profoundly, enigmatically, paradoxically.

The starting-point of the whole series of instructions here contained is the visit of the rich young man to Jesus, with the earnest inquiry—for earnest inquiry indeed it was—‘ Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life ? ’ We shall all remember the final reply of the conversation which ensued : ‘ If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven : and come and follow me. ’ And how ‘ the young man went away sorrowful, when he heard that saying ; for he had great possessions. ’ It was this pathetic incident,—this incident which evidently touched the human heart of Jesus to the quick,—that led on to all that followed. It was grievous to Him to see a human soul, in the presence of a great and critical choice, deliberately choosing (to all appearance) the lower of the two proffered alternatives ; *not* heaven, but earth ; *not* the service of God, but the service of mammon ; *not* the imitation of Christ, but conformity to the world. And so He began to speak in a way which amazed his disciples and made them ask in astonishment,—‘ Who then can be saved ? ’—about wealth, its perilous nature, the almost insurmountable obstacles which it opposed to entrance into the kingdom of heaven. ‘ Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of Heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. ’

At this point Peter gave a turn to the conversation by saying, ‘ Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee ; what shall we have therefore ? ’ ‘ *We* have done what this rich young man apparently cannot make up his mind to do ; we *have* left all to follow thee. What are we to get, then, in return for this ?

What reward is this hard sacrifice that we have made to bring us?' It is this question of Peter's that forms the starting-point of all that follows, including the parable of the twentieth chapter. And the answer of Jesus is, in brief, this: 'Every true sacrifice made for my sake shall be rewarded an hundredfold: BUT, *take care*; there is such a thing as the first becoming last, and the last first. You are first in the race now: beware lest, by and by, you find yourselves last.'

Now, dear brethren, let us try to look very carefully into this; for, depend upon it, it is of the utmost importance. As the moment of the consummation of the Saviour's sacrifice of Himself upon the Cross drew near, He seems to have dealt more and more with the subject of sacrifice; what it is, what its reward is, and how that reward may be missed. How full his mind was of the subject just at this time you will at once perceive, as you read the remainder of this twentieth chapter. You will perceive also, how hard he found it to impress the true idea of sacrifice upon the minds of his disciples; how reluctant they were to receive the teaching, which, within a week or so, was to be so terribly emphasized by the Cross. 'Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant; even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.'

The first point for us to consider is the meaning of the direct answer of Jesus to the question of Peter. This done, we will go on to consider the caution, or proviso, which follows it. This proviso begins with the words, 'But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first.' The direct answer to Peter is given in these words, 'Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake,

shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.'

Now I do not pretend to say, that I understand the whole meaning, or even a tithe of the meaning, of these wonderful words. But I cannot help seeing that the Son of Man is, at this moment, in a most true sense, sitting on the throne of his glory ; and that there is going on around us a process, a spiritual process, which may very fitly be called 'regeneration'—the 'regeneration' of the world. And I cannot help seeing also, that whilst this is so ; whilst we are even now 'in the regeneration,' whilst even now the Son of Man is sitting on the throne of his glory ; those first disciples of his have been raised, by the force of events of which He is the real author, to a position of pre-eminence answering to his own description. 'Ye shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.' These poor men, who forsook all to follow Jesus, have in very truth become the spiritual chiefs of the Christian Church. Not only was it so in their life-time ; it has been so more and more ever since. We dedicate our churches to them. We ponder their words ; and, still more, the words of Jesus which they have transmitted to us, and for which we are their debtors, with the profoundest reverence, as the rule of thought and conduct. We accept them as our leaders, our teachers, our judges. What loftier place could they occupy, even were they enthroned visibly before our eyes ? Nay ; may we not ask, Would the Son of Man Himself wield a grander power, were his glory localized on earth, and his spiritual sceptre exchanged for some visible, and therefore earthly, sceptre ?

So much for the special promise made to the disciples, and its *actual*, though it may be as yet only *partial*, fulfilment, in centuries past and to come. But the special promise to the disciples is followed by a general promise made to all those who 'forsake houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake.' They 'shall receive,' Jesus says, 'an hundredfold ; and shall inherit



everlasting life.' Or, as another Evangelist has it: 'He shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.' That is to say: No true sacrifice, made for the sake of Christ, for the sake of 'the Gospel,' for the sake of 'the kingdom of God' (for all these phrases are used by the three Evangelists in recording the incident,) can ever go without its reward; a reward which shall be felt to be out of all proportion to the sacrifice; a reward *even in kind*, as it were, in *this* life; and with the prospect of infinite blessedness beyond. But then comes the warning proviso, which, from this point of our inquiry forward, must be taken full account of: 'But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first.' And here we should be altogether at a loss, were it not for the parable which St. Matthew alone of the Evangelists has recorded. For the parable was plainly intended by Jesus to explain his own words, and to show how and in what sense the last might be first, and the first last. For this is the meaning of the '*So*' of the concluding verse of the parable. 'So,' that is, 'thus,' 'in this way,'—'the last shall be first, and the first last.'

Let us, then, turn our attention now to the parable. It is, you know, of an 'householder' who goes out early, at six o'clock in the morning, to hire labourers into his vineyard. He agrees to pay them so much per diem,—apparently the ordinary day's wage of the time,—about one shilling of our money; and forthwith despatches them to their work. At nine o'clock, at twelve, at three, and at five, he goes out again into the market-place, the rendezvous of the unemployed, and hires those whom he finds there. He makes no agreement with them. He simply sets them to work, with the assurance, 'Whatsoever is right, I will give you.' At six the day's work is over, and the labourers are summoned to receive their wage. The last hired are paid first. All alike, from first to last, are paid the same amount; the 'fair day's wage for the fair

day's work' of the time. Whereupon the first complain, saying : 'These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day.' To which the Master's reply is : 'Friend, I do thee no wrong ; didst not thou agree with me for a penny ? Take that thine is, and go thy way : I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own ? Is thine eye evil, because I am good ?'

Few passages of Holy Scripture have exercised the minds of commentators so much as this. They have asked, naturally enough, 'What is the penny, which is dealt out by the householder at the day's end equally to all the labourers alike ?' They have explained it,—*some*, of the rewards of the life that now is ; and *some*, of the rewards of the life that is to come. And it is clear, that between these two broad lines of interpretation we *must* make our choice. No third alternative is open to us. We *must* associate the parable, either with the words, 'He shall receive an hundredfold now in this time ;' *or*, with the words, 'He shall receive in the world to come eternal life.' Now from the whole symbolism and phraseology of the parable it seems to me quite clear, that the first of these two explanations is the right one. The day's labour, the penny a day, the various hours of hiring, the payment made at last, not by the householder himself, but by his steward :—'When even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first':—all these little details and incidents of the parable point, I think, distinctly to the conclusion, that the horizon of it is bounded by the life that now is ; that it deals with the first half, and only with the first half, of the promise of Jesus : 'Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, *who shall not receive manifold more in this present time.*'

But to press the meaning of the 'penny' beyond this seems

to me a great mistake. The penny given to all the labourers alike, whether they had worked twelve hours, or nine, or six, or three, or only one hour, in the master's vineyard, seems merely intended to intimate that the rewards of sacrifice in this life bear no proportion whatever to the sacrifices which have been actually made. The two things, the sacrifice and the earthly reward, are totally incommensurable quantities. It is impossible to adjust the one to the other, the second to the first. And yet there *is* a reward even in this life; and the true labourer will ever feel that the reward is out of all proportion to his sacrifice.

I say again,—The sacrifice and the reward, so far as this life is concerned, cannot be measured against one another: and it is with *this* life alone that the parable has to do. Now what Christ says is in effect this: 'Every true sacrifice, made for the true cause, shall ever have its reward even in this life.' But the moment you begin to bargain over it, and to say, 'We have forsaken all; what shall we have therefore?'—that moment the virtue of the sacrifice begins to evaporate. Be content to work in the Master's vineyard for *his* sake, and for the work's sake; and you shall receive an hundred-fold, even on your own estimate of your own work. Begin to measure yourself against your fellow-workers, and to say, 'I am worse paid than he,' and forthwith the spirit of sacrifice, which gave a spiritual value to your work, has disappeared: there is left only so much bare and measurable labour, for which the money wage is ample recompense. It will have to be said to you, 'Didst not thou agree with me for a penny? Take that thine is, and go thy way.'

Brethren, are these things so, or not? Is it true, or is it not, that, in proportion as we strive to serve our fellow-men and to minister to them out of pure love and regard to Christ and his Gospel and the kingdom of God, we *do* receive an hundred-fold even in this present time? Can it be for a moment doubted that, at last if not at first, honour and reverence and

gratitude and love have ever waited upon those who have been content to sacrifice themselves freely and generously and unsparingly in the service of their fellow-men? I am not thinking now merely of the great benefactors of the human race,—philanthropists, and missionaries, and martyrs, and the like. I am thinking of the little opportunities of service and sacrifice which are ever presenting themselves to us all: which *some* embrace so gladly and use so graciously. And I call you to witness, that amongst those who so embrace and use them, even in the humblest walks of life, there ever gathers a halo of gratitude and love and reverence, which is a strange wonder and a joyful surprise to themselves, but which can be neither wonder nor surprise to those who at the feet of Jesus have learned those laws of the kingdom of God, according to which these things are so.

And again I ask you,—Is not the whole state of the case altered, the moment the service ceases to be free and spontaneous and generous—the moment it ceases to be done in the true spirit of sacrifice, asking nothing in return; and becomes, instead, cold, calculating, grudging, mercenary? As soon as this is the case, the penny-wage becomes an adequate measure of it, and often a more than adequate discharge of it. The worker who works, not for the kingdom of God's sake, but to advance his own interests or to serve his own selfish ends, will doubtless have his reward. But in so far as he works in this selfish spirit, and not in the spirit of sacrifice, he will certainly miss the reward which belongs only to the latter. Nay, more than this: it matters not what the quality of the selfishness be, nor how, to all appearance, elevated and refined. It may even know how to transform itself into an angel of light. The moment the spirit of self-regard enters into the work, and the service is done, *not* out of pure desire to help, *but* with the view of winning the gratitude and esteem and affection of those whom we purpose to help, even though we intend to turn that gratitude and esteem and affection ultimately to some

higher purpose ; that moment, again, the virtue is gone out of it. It ceases to come within the scope of the promise of Jesus, 'He shall receive an hundred-fold now in this present time.'

My dear friends, this is a subject which searches us all very deeply ; and, not least, those amongst us who would fain aim highest, and live their lives in true devotion to the service of Christ through the service of their fellow-men. It searches us *all*, I say ; for it probes our motives to the very root : our *motives*, and, I must add, our *aims*. It compels us to ask ourselves what we are living for, and what the springs of our life really are. And if the honest answer to these questions be sad and sorrowful, and such as may well put us to the blush, yet we need not on that account bate one jot of heart or hope for the future. The parable is full of encouragement for us. Even those who went into the vineyard at the eleventh hour, relying upon the Master's promise, 'Whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive,'—got their penny at last. It does not matter, in one sense, how late in the day it be with us, provided only we will enter the vineyard at once, and work. Instead of mourning idly over lost or wasted opportunities of service, let us obey the Master's call without a moment's delay. Paul, whose conversion we were commemorating on Thursday last, had wasted many an hour of the day before he at last listened to the call and entered the vineyard. Yet now he sits on his throne, foremost (may we not say?) amongst the Twelve, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. That true direction of the will—that effort, and energy, and bent of our higher spiritual nature, which lies at the root of all true service and sacrifice—cannot be gauged by hours. Time cannot measure it, any more than the penny-wage can. He only can estimate its intensity and its force, who knows the very secrets of our hearts, and whose measure of us is very different from our own measure of others, or even of ourselves. There may be those here to-night who are last now, and who yet may be first ; as surely as there are also those, who,

being first now, may yet be last. The final account will doubtless bring with it a strange and startling reversal of human judgments.

I am most anxious to give a very practical point and direction to all that I have been saying to-night. Whatever may be the final issue and the reversal of present positions, there are doubtless 'first' and 'last' amongst us at this moment; though no human eye can discern which they are. For the precedence of which we speak is measured by the intensity and purity of that spirit of service and sacrifice, which only the eye of God can discern and estimate. Now if we have already embraced that spirit as the law of our lives, and in the power of it have entered into the vineyard and are labouring there, let us strive and watch and pray that no selfish motives nor self-seeking aims be allowed to taint and corrupt it. There must be none of Peter's, 'What shall we have therefore?'—none of the mean jealousy of the labourers of the parable, 'These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day.' We must understand, and in our inmost souls feel and confess, that to work in God's vineyard, to help and serve our fellow-men in such ways as lie open to us, out of love to Christ, and for the pure delight of serving and helping them, is its own reward, and a reward far beyond our own poor miserable deserts. And if to this reward be added that of their esteem and gratitude and affection, we must welcome it thankfully, and yet not cling to it too eagerly, lest by doing so we should mar the purity of that spirit of service and sacrifice, which alone can make us worthy and effectual workers in the Master's vineyard.

If, on the contrary, we are yet as the unhired labourers of the parable,—if we are still amongst those last, who may yet, if they will, be first,—*then*, indeed, it is high time for us to consider our position, and without delay to alter it. The labourers idling in the market-place are those who have as yet refused to come under that law of sacrifice and service, which is the true

law for us all. They are living utterly selfish lives, trying to make everything and everybody bend to their own selfish will and pleasure. All this will have to be altered, and there is not a moment to lose in doing it. They must go home to-night with their minds made up henceforth to serve those around them, instead of looking to be only served by them ; to make little and great sacrifices for them, instead of merely exacting such sacrifices from them. They will find it difficult to do this at first : the old habit of selfishness will be ever coming back upon them, haunting and hampering them. But they will soon find their happiness in it ; and their love for those around them—love taught them by nature itself—will before long make it easier and easier to them. Thus they will be training themselves for a larger field of service and sacrifice in the world around. They will begin to understand the words of Jesus : ‘ It is more blessed to give than to receive ; ’—‘ If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all ; ’—‘ Whosoever will be great among you shall be your minister ; and whosoever of you will be the chiefest shall be servant of all.’

O blessed law of true service ! Oh, dear brethren, what a grand and truly noble ambition is here held out to us ! ‘ I charge thee, fling away ambition ’ is, according to Shakspeare, Wolsey’s dying command to his faithful follower, Cromwell. ‘ Fling away ambition ; ’ yes, indeed, fling away that base and sordid ambition which has *self* for its idol ; which has name, and fame, and wealth, and distinction, for its end and aim. Fling *this* away, false, and fleeting, and perilous as it is ; but fling it away only to enter upon that path of true ambition, to which Christ Himself, by precept and example, invites us ; that path, the guide-post and lodestar of which is ever and for all this,—‘ Come, take up the cross, and follow me.’

## SERMON XIII.

### ST. PAUL'S CHARACTER.

2 COR. xi. 16—23.

I say again, Let no man think me a fool ; if otherwise, yet as a fool receive me, that I may boast myself a little. That which I speak, I speak it not after the Lord, but as it were foolishly, in this confidence of boasting. Seeing that many glory after the flesh, I will glory also. For ye suffer fools gladly, seeing ye yourselves are wise. For ye suffer, if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour you, if a man take of you, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on the face. I speak as concerning reproach, as though we had been weak. Howbeit whereinsoever any is bold, (I speak foolishly,) I am bold also. Are they Hebrews ? so am I. Are they Israelites ? so am I. Are they the seed of Abraham ? so am I. Are they ministers of Christ ? (I speak as a fool) I am more ; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft.

THIS is a very curious and somewhat perplexing passage. So, I should think, we must all feel, as we hear it read on this Sunday in the Epistle for the day. It is not quite according to our notion of what we should expect to find in Holy Scripture. Most readers will be inclined to pass very lightly over it ; not knowing exactly what to make of it, or how to explain it to themselves, yet devoutly, and most rightly, believing that there *is* an explanation of it. Let us look carefully into it to-night, dear brethren. I believe we shall find it, on closer acquaintance, a very profitable, instructive, and most suggestive passage.



First of all, we must make quite sure that we *understand* it : understand its *language*, which is *one* thing ; and understand its *tone*, as we should call it, which is *another* thing. For we may understand the words correctly enough, and yet quite miss the meaning of them, from not understanding the *tone* with which they are said or written. It is so, as we all know by common experience, in our intercourse with one another ; by *letter* more particularly, where voice and emphasis, gesture and manner, have to be supplied by the reader, and are often quite wrongly supplied, so that the writer's meaning is totally misconceived. Half the misunderstandings of life arise in this way, or in a very similar way ; from misreading what is written, or from misreporting what has been said, altering *not* the words, it may be, but only the tone or the context.

If we read the last three chapters of this Second Epistle to the Corinthians consecutively and carefully, it will not be very difficult to understand both the language and the tone of the passage which I have selected as my text. St. Paul is evidently very much '*hurt*' by the treatment which he had received, and was receiving, from at least a very considerable section of the Christian Church at Corinth. The Church there was, humanly speaking, entirely his own creation ; and, accordingly, he took the greatest possible interest in it, and was very deeply attached to it. Now he finds his influence with them undermined, and himself the object of unsparing and unkindly criticism. One of these criticisms he himself reports in the preceding chapter. 'His letters,' say they, 'are weighty and powerful ; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible.' To the same criticism he refers in this chapter from which our text is taken :—'But though I be rude in speech, yet not in knowledge ;' the word 'rude' being used in its old original sense of '*inexperienced*,' and not in the derived sense in which we use it now. The taunt stung him, I should suppose ; as taunts *will* sting, when there is just enough truth in them to barb the shaft and make it stick, whilst at the same

time they are fundamentally false. Tried by the rules of the fashionable rhetoric of the day, St. Paul *was* a bad speaker. But then those rules were bad, when it came to be a question of how to deliver most effectively the Gospel-message.

Such taunts as this, however,—such mere personal criticisms,—go a very little way towards producing the tone of injured, wounded feeling which pervades this chapter. What grieved and hurt St. Paul more than anything else was, that he saw that the Corinthian Christians were drifting away from *his* influence and *his* teaching, and were drifting under influences and teaching diametrically opposed to his own. He mentions no names, so that we can do little more than guess at the meaning of his allusions. But he is evidently referring to the arrival of some new teacher or new teachers at Corinth, who spoke very slightly of St. Paul and his doctrine, and gave out that they were come to set him and his converts right. Most likely these new teachers belonged to that Judaizing section of the Christian Church which was always trying to fasten the yoke of the Mosaic law upon the Gentile converts, and thus practically to make the spread of the Gospel and the growth of the Church impossible. Between such teaching and St. Paul's no compromise, no peace, no truce was possible. Thinking of the Corinthians, his beloved Corinthians, in danger of being seduced from their allegiance to himself, and 'the simplicity that is in Christ' (to use his own phrase), by such teaching as this and by such men as these, St. Paul is full of anxiety, full of indignation also, pained and hurt to the last degree. Who are these men that his Corinthians should transfer their loyalty so readily from him to them? What are *their* claims, compared with *his*? Are they 'Hebrews,' 'Israelites,' 'the seed of Abraham,' 'ministers of Christ?' He is more: 'in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft.'

There mixes, too, something of scorn and wrong with the grief and the indignation and the injured personal feeling.

'Ye suffer fools gladly, seeing ye yourselves are wise.' Of course you will cheerfully put up with me and my folly, being so very wise yourselves. It is little or nothing that I ask you to put up with, compared with what you put up with from these new teachers. You let them tyrannize over you, to any extent. They may rob you, strike you, domineer over you, as much as ever they please. You put up with it all : so wise are you. 'Ye suffer, if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour you, if a man take of you, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on the face.' This, of course, is irony,—half playful, half serious. But the playfulness of the passage bears a very small proportion to the seriousness—the intense seriousness—of it. The prevailing tone of the whole is an almost passionate self-assertion,—self-assertion wrung from him almost in spite of himself, and with a kind of scorn of himself in the doing of it ('I speak foolishly,' 'I speak as a fool')—wrung from him, I say, by grief, and indignation, and anxiety,—by a turbid tide of feeling, in which these at least are the most conspicuous elements.

Have I misjudged St. Paul? Is this, or is this not, the tone of the passage? And if it is, what are we to think of it? And what are we to think of the writer of it? Is he to be less *Saint* Paul—Paul, the *saint*—to us, than he has been? Are we to take him down from his pedestal of glory, because wounded personal feeling, indignation, grief, scorn, irony swayed his mind as he wrote the words of our text? I think not. And I will go on to tell you, why I think not.

Would any thoughtful and reverent reader of St. Paul's Epistles wish that he had not written this passage; or that the epistle which contains it had not come down to us; or that, at least, the passage itself had not been preserved? Should we not all feel that the removal of such a passage from our Bible would be the loss of something which we could ill afford to lose? I think we should. And the question is,—why? This is the question which I wish to try and answer to-night.

First of all, then, there is the strong human interest of the

passage. It is a revelation of character. The writer lays himself bare to us. You hear, as you read, the very pulsations of his heart,—pulsations, wild and feverish, perhaps, but genuine, honest, manly, true. It is a passionate outburst of human feeling, a touch of nature, which makes us at once feel that he and we are akin. There are no conventionalities and etiquettes,—none of the honied courtesies and politenesses of society,—here. We have the man himself, and find him one of like feelings with ourselves. He can be wounded, and hurt, and sensitive,—torn with grief and anxiety,—proud, and scornful, and ironical,—as *we* can be. It may be undignified, this self-assertion of his, wrung reluctantly and in scorn of himself from him; but we could ill afford to lose it. Without it we should not know him, as we do now know him. He would be much less of a real character and person to us. As it is, I venture to say, we know St. Paul—or we may know St. Paul—better than any other person of whom history tells us, better than our next-door neighbours, better than any but a very few of our nearest and dearest friends. Now this is an immense gain in many ways to us.

For one thing, it makes all his letters—not this particular letter only, but *all* his letters—much more real and forceful to us. They are not mere pages in a book, however sacred. They are the words of a living person, a *man*, a friend. And this feeling of reality and life-likeness diffuses itself from St. Paul's Epistles, more or less, over the whole history and literature of which Jesus Christ is the centre. The hostile criticism, which would distil the life and soul out of Christianity, finds ever a most obstinate and intractable fact in these letters of St. Paul; and, still more, in the personality, in the character, which the letters reveal to us. There is nothing made-up here. The springs of it are laid bare to us. They are in Jesus Christ. Suppress the gospel narratives, and we might almost reconstruct the life of Christ, and the character of Christ, out of the Epistles of St. Paul.

But this is not all. It is through such a passage as this which I have taken as my text, that the Epistles of St. Paul become, not merely theological treatises; not merely wise counsels addressed to Christian Churches and Christian people; not merely pledges and guarantees of the reality of that which we call Christianity; but something more,—a biography, or rather an autobiography, of the writer. It has been said, 'The proper study of mankind is man.' A biography, and still more an autobiography, if only it be honest and genuine, has a charm for us, of which all, from the youngest to the oldest, must be conscious. Now, *that* autobiography of St. Paul which we have in his letters is unmistakably honest and genuine. They present us with a photograph of himself,—memoirs of his life,—a portraiture of his character from his own hand.

A piece of real personal experience is always full of interest to us. If older people will give us the results of their own experience of life, we are always grateful to them. Anything which throws light upon human life and human conduct is welcome to us. And why? Possibly there may be something of mere idle curiosity in the matter; the same idle curiosity, which fills the world with foolish gossip. But there is certainly also something much better than this in it. To every serious and thoughtful mind the one all-important subject is the conduct of life. And everything which throws light upon this subject, and serves as a guide to ourselves in the conduct of our own lives, is full of interest to us. Actions and words lie on the surface; but we want to get below the surface, and trace the *motives*, the springs of conduct, at work beneath. Whoever will do this for us—will lay bare some page of personal experience, or reveal the secret workings of heart, and conscience, and soul, and will within—has our breathless attention at once. It is even such a page as this that St. Paul lays bare to us here. He opens more than his *mind*; he opens his *heart* to us. We see it all sensitive, wounded, bleeding; not without human weakness certainly, but for that very reason all the more winning, and attractive, and (I venture to think) mighty for good.

We will return to this point by and by. It is of a piece with what has been already said, to remark what an interest always attaches to what are called 'personal explanations.' Let it be known, for example, that there is going to be a personal explanation in the House of Commons, and I believe I am not wrong in saying that the House is sure to be crowded. Now this interest is by no means wholly due to the baser elements of our poor human nature. It arises, at least in great measure, out of this same deep sympathy with human *conduct* and sense of its importance. It is no easy matter, as we all find, to conduct our own lives aright; and the most trifling contribution of help towards the task is welcome to us. Not that these so-called personal explanations can contribute much to our assistance. They are almost always a mistake; they are explanations which explain nothing. Friends understand us without them; and enemies only find new food for cavil and criticism in them. And the reason is obvious. No human being can dissect and analyze all the motives which make his own conduct what it is, in such a way as to lay them out fairly, labelled and in order, on the table for the inspection of others. Where there is sympathy between character and character, each is understood by the other without a word of explanation. Where no such sympathy exists, no amount of personal explanation will make the one intelligible to the other. Now the charm of the passage from which our text is taken lies in this, that it is not a cool, calculated, personal explanation. It is the burning lava of passionate human feeling, breaking through the superincumbent crust, and revealing the torrents of motive and impulse that are at work beneath.

Cold critics, analyzing St. Paul's character as it unveils itself to us here, will find plenty of fault with it. They will say that he is too sensitive; that he is too jealous and even fierce in his affection; that his assertion of himself, and of his claims to the allegiance of the Corinthians, is undignified and unworthy; that his whole nature is too vehement, too impetuous, too exacting. It would not be difficult to dispute the ground with

such critics, inch by inch, were it worth our while to do so. Instead of doing so, let us freely concede that there is a touch of human infirmity revealing itself in the passionate language of these last chapters of this noble Epistle. Now I say that this very weakness, being of the kind it is, not only increases the attractiveness of Paul's character, but also makes it more powerful for good. This may sound paradoxical on a first hearing, but it is not really so.

A recent writer, commenting upon the persecution of the Protestants more than 300 years ago under Queen Mary, says, with remarkable acuteness and insight :—'It was with the unerring instinct of a popular movement that, among a crowd of far more heroic sufferers, the Protestants fixed, in spite of his recantations, on the martyrdom of Cranmer as the death-blow to Catholicism in England. For one man who felt within him the joy of Rowland Taylor at the prospect of the stake, there were thousands who felt the shuddering dread of Cranmer. The triumphant cry of Latimer could reach only hearts as bold as his own ; but the sad pathos of the Primate's humiliation and repentance struck chords of sympathy and pity in the hearts of all. It is from that moment that we may trace the bitter remembrance of the blood shed in the cause of Rome ; which, however partial and unjust it must seem to an historic observer, still lies graven deep in the temper of the English people.'

The noble metals, gold and silver, require, as we all know, some alloy of baser metal, in order to fit them for the service of men. And it seems as if the noblest characters required some alloy, some dash of human weakness, if they are to take hold of other minds, and exercise upon them their full force for good. But then all depends upon the nature of this alloy,—upon what this dash of human weakness is. In Cranmer's case, what gave such weight to his martyrdom was the natural shrinking from such a horrible death,—natural human shrinking from pain, and torture, and death. I am only using Cranmer's case to illustrate my meaning. There could hardly be two men

more unlike than Cranmer and St. Paul. But in St. Paul, too, there *is* what I call this dash of human weakness. What is it? It is very hard to define it. We *feel* it, as we read our text, without being able to define it. But whatever it be, there is nothing *base* in it,—nothing mean, nothing selfish, nothing coarse, or vulgar, or paltry. It just makes us feel, that there is a point of contact between us and him; that he is not a being of a different order, but one of ourselves, sensitive, suffering, struggling as we are; and so it enables him to take hold of us, and brings the full force and grandeur of his character and his teaching and his life to bear upon us.

In one of the most beautiful of our modern hymns we say :

‘O Saviour Christ, thou too art man,  
Thou hast been troubled, tempted, tried;  
Thy kind but searching glance can scan  
The very wounds that shame would hide.’

What is it but this, that gives to Jesus Christ Himself his wondrous hold upon our hearts; what but *this*, that even in *Him* we trace the trouble, and the trial, and the struggle, which indicate the weakness, the sinless weakness, yet still the weakness, of his humanity. Cut out of the Gospels the cry of struggling anguish, ‘O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me;’ and the cry of inward darkness, bordering closely on despair, ‘My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’—and all that is of a piece with these, and that culminates in these; and *what then*? The Christ that would be left us, would be a very different Christ. We might dread his severity; we might shrink and cower before his perfection; but He would cease to draw us with cords of a man, with bands of love. His touch would lose its healing power; He would no longer be what we mean, when we call Him ‘*Saviour*.’

It is a deep descent from the sinless weakness of Christ to the dash of human infirmity which we find in St. Paul. And what a descent again is it from St. Paul to ourselves! There is something lovable even in the very faults of St. Paul; there is



nothing that can lower him in our estimation. Those faults, as we have seen, do but bring him into closer contact with ourselves, and enable him to take a firmer hold upon us for good. Oh ! how different it is with ourselves, and our own faults, and failings, and infirmities. Let us look into them, and strive in real earnest to repair them. With *him* it is but a dash of alloy, making the noble metal all the more serviceable. With *us* it seems as if we were all alloy. Let us entreat our Lord Jesus Christ to baptize us, according to his most excellent promise, with the Holy Ghost and with fire ; whatever suffering and sorrow that baptism may cost us.

## SERMON XIV.

## ST. PAUL'S THEOLOGY.

## ROMANS ix. 18—21.

Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?

## ROMANS v. 5—8.

The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

THE former of these two passages is taken, as you will remember, from the second lesson for this evening's service. On first thoughts there is something very *terrible* (I don't know what other word to use) about it. Read by itself, without anything to qualify it, it sounds like a naked assertion of the sovereignty of God; and *that* sovereignty, a sovereignty based on mere power. It *seems* as if St. Paul were saying, that the *might* of God is the measure of his *right*; that, having made us,

He is perfectly at liberty to do what He pleases with us. I say, 'It *seems* so;' because we know that St. Paul cannot mean to assert this in any such naked and absolute fashion. Before he could mean this, he must have forgotten what he had written only a few pages before, in our second text, about that Love of God, which no *words*,—which nothing less than the Cross of Christ,—could express.

In a passage like this, a great deal depends, as I was saying last Sunday evening, upon the *tone* which one reads into it, and the *feeling* with which one reads it. Now this ninth chapter must not be separated from the tenth and the eleventh. The ninth, tenth, and eleventh chapters form one indivisible section of the Epistle; and they ought to be read together; and they *must* be read together, if we are to understand them at all. The tone of the whole is then easily discoverable from its commencement and its conclusion: *from its commencement*, 'I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart: for I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever, Amen:—*from its conclusion*, 'For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief: even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy. For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all. O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!'

The commentators seem generally to take it for granted, that, in the verses which I have read as my first text, St. Paul is arguing with *objectors*, with *cavillers*, with captious objectors and presumptuous cavillers, whom he is putting down with a high hand. Thus, one writer, of whom it is impossible to speak

with too great respect, commenting upon the 19th and 20th verses, says on the words, 'Why doth he yet find fault?'—'*The obvious cavil*:'—and on the words, 'Who hath resisted his will,' or, rather, 'his wish?'—'*The caviller seems to select "wish" as a stronger word than "will."* If it is God's wish that I should perish, how can I withstand Him?'—and on the words, 'Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?'—'*Such cavillers are not to be argued with. It is enough to remind them of the distance between man and God.*' But it is, to say the least, worth our while to consider, whether the debate is not really being carried on, simply and solely, in St. Paul's own mind; whether he is not stating, frankly and candidly, his own difficulties, and solving them as best he can; and whether, so far from putting down captious objectors in some high-handed fashion, he is not really working his own way, painfully and laboriously, through the darkness into the light. Viewed in this aspect,—and for my own part, I believe that this is the true aspect in which to view it,—the passage becomes infinitely more interesting, more instructive, more valuable, more pathetic. We should be sorry to think that St. Paul had set an example of that high-handed dealing with doubts and difficulties,—doubts often honest and difficulties often most real,—of which the after history of the Christian Church presents us with so many instances, and which has always proved so mischievous,—nay, so disastrous. But if he knew, as he seems to have known, by his own experience, the *burden* of doubt, and what it was *not* to stifle, *but* to face and fight, his doubts;—*then*, his example may be of the greatest possible service to us; even though, as might very well be the case, *his* difficulties were not *ours*.

Yet are they not ours? When, for example, it comes to *this* with him, that he must say, as in our lesson for this evening we have heard him saying, 'That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith: but Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of

righteousness : ' what then ? Have we not here one of those cruel paradoxes, which human life is ever presenting, now in one form and now in another ? Here is a nation, elected for the very purpose of bearing witness to the Divine Righteousness ; and, behold, it persists in pursuing a course, in which that righteousness cannot be found. It takes a false direction ; a blind alley, as it were, from which there is no outlet. It pursues the law of righteousness, St. Paul says, yet never overtakes it ; because it pursues it by a wrong route, on a false system, ' not by faith, but, as it were, by the works of the law.' And on the other hand, here is the Gentile world, taking no pains in this search after righteousness, and yet attaining to it. The non-elect world attains to *that*, to which the elect Church does not attain ; that elect Church being allowed, and choosing, to pursue a path by which the attainment of righteousness is impossible. Is this no paradox, no enigma of the Divine government, no mystery of the kingdom of God ? And does it become less paradoxical, when we associate it, as we are bound to do, with other facts which come within our own experience ? I have in my thoughts at this moment two Englishmen, who have attracted at different times a large share of public attention ; living men, whose influence is still felt ; men of great gifts and noble characters ; men born, we should have said, to bring nothing but healing and help to the Church of which they were ministers. And yet these truly elect men have been used, one would say, in the Providence of God, merely to indicate the path—one in one direction, and one in another,—in which true progress is impossible :—one, Romewards ; the other, in the direction of that negative criticism, which furnishes nothing but a foundation of sand for the reconstruction of our Christian faith. Is not this strange,—strange as Israel's failure of old to discover the righteousness, for the very quest of which it was elected ?

This paradox may seem to some of us comparatively a subtle one. But the paradox of our text is broad and palpable.

'Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?' If God's will acts in this sovereign, arbitrary way,—hardening *this* heart, softening *that* heart, as chance or caprice may direct,—what then? Is not the ground of human responsibility cut from beneath us? What room is there, *then*, for moral disapproval, and for retributive justice? Nor do we evade the difficulty by saying, as the writer already quoted says,—only throwing the difficulty back one step, and changing the form of it, but not in the least degree solving or removing it: 'It is by the operation of a law of man's nature as God created it, that he who will not turn, at last cannot. And God, who established that law of man's nature, is said in Scripture to *do* that which occurs under it, or results from it. He has framed at his pleasure the moral constitution of man, according to which the rebellious sinner is at last obdurate.'

This is the old, old puzzle, which has haunted men's minds from the very first, and which haunts them still,—now by one name, and now by another: liberty and necessity,—bondage and freedom of the will. Call it as we will, the thing is the same,—the same old problem of the relation of man's will to God's Will. The moment we begin to reason upon this problem, we are lost in perplexity. The interplay of the Divine Will and the human will can never have its path determined by any calculus yet discovered. As soon as it is attempted, one or other of the two forces is sure to be omitted from the calculation, and to disappear altogether. We are left either with a naked sovereignty on the Divine side, accompanied by an absolute bondage on the human side; or else we are left with a Divine Will, which is no *will* at all, but simply an indifference, a neutrality, an abstinence from all action and influence whatever.

At this point we feel what a difference it makes in our text, whether we regard it as an endeavour to put down objectors, and to make short work with them; or whether we regard it as

a debate with doubts and difficulties, which suggested themselves to St. Paul's own mind, and under the full pressure of which he himself was coming, or had come. In the first case, we can all see that it is no reply at all to the difficulty urged. It only removes the difficulty to a point, at which it ceases to press against the reason, only to press more vehemently than ever against the conscience and the moral sense. For it may well be asked: 'Is, then, man merely as clay in the potter's hand; *man*, with all his capacity of suffering, and his sense of right and wrong, merely as the passionless clay in the potter's hand? And if, being what he is, he is dealt with by the Creator as though he were only clay, to be fashioned into *this* shape or *that*, and doomed to *this* suffering or *that* felicity, as the case may be,—what are we to think of the Creator? Does the fact of creation invest the Creator with unlimited rights, unaccompanied by any corresponding responsibilities? Or does it answer most nearly to that earthly relation of parent and child, which, whilst giving rights to the parents, gives rights to the child; and which, whilst establishing the parents' claim to the obedience of the child, establishes also the child's claim to the love and care of the parents?'

Regarded, then, as an endeavour to forcibly suppress the infidel doubts of some supposed sceptic and caviller, St. Paul's reply to the question, stated by himself, can only be pronounced an utter failure; a reply, which only raises ten worse difficulties for one which it settles or closes. But it is very different, if we regard it as a caution, addressed by himself to himself, as he goes sounding on his dim and perilous way, through problems which human reason is all incompetent to solve. It is, then, tantamount to saying: 'What am I, that I should dare to exercise my powers of thought and speculation upon such a theme as this,—I, who am but as clay in the potter's hand,—a finite being in the hands of Infinite power,—the creature in the presence of the Creator?' Now, *this* attitude of mind is simply the true philosophic attitude. It has been well said,

by one of the wisest of men and subtlest of thinkers : 'The foundation of all true philosophy is humility.' And this is the attitude which St. Paul is most careful to inculcate elsewhere. For example, in our Epistle for to-day : 'Now we see through a glass'—that is, by means of a mirror ; the reflection only, not the object itself—'darkly ;' more exactly, 'in a riddle : '—'but then, face to face.' And this is the attitude of mind, which our Lord Himself most earnestly inculcates upon all his disciples,—bidding them 'humble themselves, and become as little children.' And this, indeed, is the attitude, which, the more earnestly and seriously we inquire, not only into religious questions, but into questions of all kinds,—historical, scientific, or whatever they may be,—the more do we find ourselves compelled to adopt. The more the circle of our knowledge enlarges, the larger becomes the circumference, at every point of which we feel our ignorance, and have the sense of vastness and mystery forced upon us.

It would be impossible, however, to leave the matter so. And St. Paul does not leave it so. We can leave many problems unsolved,—*this* of the relation of the human will to the Divine Will amongst others,—*when* we have settled it clearly in our own minds, how we shall think of *God*,—of his nature, of his character, of his purpose and feeling towards his human creation : *not till then*. As we read these three chapters,—the ninth, tenth, and eleventh of this Epistle to the Romans,—carefully and as a whole, we feel that St. Paul makes little or no progress towards a solution of his doubts, until almost the end of the passage is reached, and reached in such words as those already quoted : 'God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all : Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God !' So long as he is laboriously trying to *reason* the thing out, neither he nor his readers can find any satisfaction. The last twenty-five, and still more the last twelve, verses of the eleventh chapter make all the difference to the passage taken as whole ; transforming



it out of what would otherwise be intolerably harsh and oppressive, into warmth, and light, and gladness. He rises above his own efforts to reason the thing out, in the strength of a fresh perception of that unsearchable glory of God, which may be safely trusted to do nothing but what is wise, and just, and loving. This perception does not come to him through any process of reasoning and argumentation. It breaks upon his soul like light. He escapes at one bound from the trammels of his own logic, in the sense of that grace and love of God in Christ, of which he writes in our second text: 'The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commended his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.'

Very few of us will be able to follow the course of St. Paul's argument in these three chapters. But all of us can seize that point of view of his, which enables him to trust the future of Israel,—his beloved Israel,—to the unsearchable grace and wisdom of God. Where had he learned that trust? Not at the feet of Gamaliel; not through all his vast stores of Greek and Rabbinical learning: not through any exercise of his own quick intelligence and acute reasoning powers; not here nor there;—but at the foot of the Cross. It was there and thence that he had learned the boundless Charity of God; had learned to trust himself to that Charity; had learned (harder lesson still!) to trust his loved ones to that Charity.

That glorious Epistle of to-day would be a flash of the emptiest rhetoric; that beautiful prayer which we are taught to pray to-day would be an idle and a foolish prayer; if it were not for this boundless Charity of God; if we might not believe with St. John, that '*God is love.*' Neither St. John nor St. Paul attempt to prove this thesis. We *cannot* prove it. It

cannot be proved. But we shall welcome it and believe it, just in proportion as we are enabled to receive Jesus Christ to our hearts as the most lovable and adorable of men, and to discern in Him the image of God, and in his cross that love of the Father for us, his lost children, of which St. Paul writes : ' He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things ? ' And just in proportion as we welcome and embrace this Gospel of the boundless Charity of God, we shall seek to be moulded by the living power of that Charity into the same image and likeness. Listen once more to St. Paul's own account of it : ' Charity suffereth long, and is kind ; Charity envieth not ; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil ; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth ; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.'

## SERMON XV.

## REVIVAL.

## PSALM lxxxv. 6.

Wilt thou not revive us again? P. B. Version—'Wilt thou not turn again and quicken us?'

A FEW thoughts on a subject, chosen for its suitableness to the first Sunday service of this Lent season, upon which we entered on Wednesday last,—this is all that I am able to offer to you this morning, dear brethren. The words, 'Wilt thou not revive us again?' or, rather, 'Wilt not *thou* revive us again?' strike the key-note of all that I wish to say to you.

The psalm was doubtless written at some time or other during those weary years which followed the return of the exiles from Babylon to Jerusalem; those weary years, so graphically described in the opening verses of Nehemiah's book, thus: 'The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire.' Such a condition of things exactly explains the conflict of thought and feeling and expression, which pervades the psalm; the prayer for mercy, preceded by the acknowledgment that mercy has been granted; the confession, 'Lord, thou art become gracious unto thy land: thou hast turned away the captivity of Jacob,'—followed after an interval of two verses by

the earnest petition, 'Turn us then, O God our Saviour, and let thine anger cease from us : wilt thou be displeased at us for ever? and wilt thou stretch out thy wrath from one generation to another?'

This hint will be enough for those who wish to study the psalm as a whole. It will make every part of it luminous to them. But for ourselves this morning a much smaller field of view must suffice. We shall find no need to travel beyond the thoughts suggested by the prayer of our text,—'Wilt not *thou* quicken us again?' The '*Thou*' in the original is emphatic; and it must be emphasized accordingly in the English. A whole world of fresh meaning is thus thrown into the prayer. The Psalmist felt and said, that there was no hope of life and revival for himself or for his nation, except in God; and that in God there *was* hope both for him and for them,—that He *could* and *would* quicken. To the question of another psalmist—'And now, Lord, what is my hope?'—he would have answered with equal positiveness, 'Truly my hope is even in thee.' Therefore he addresses God, as, by nature and property, a 'Saviour;' 'Turn us then, O God our Saviour.' And so the prayer of the text comes to this: 'Wilt not thou quicken us again? Yea, most surely thou *wilt*: for thou, and only thou, *canst* do so; and *as* surely as thou canst, thou wilt.' It reminds us of the touching incident in the Gospels, where the unhappy leper comes to Jesus with the words, 'Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean:' to which the answer at once is, 'I will: be thou clean.'

Thus the prayer of the text turns upon two very simple poles of thought—*this* of quickening or revival; and *this* of God, as one whose very *nature* and *will* it is to quicken and revive. And these two very simple thoughts I wish to apply this morning, in the simplest and homeliest way possible, to the season of Lent;—what it ought to *be* to us, and what it ought to *do* for us; and how we should use it, so as to gain real and lasting good from it.

The season of Lent ought to be, in one word, a season of *revival*,—understanding by the word ‘revival’ what the Psalmist understood by it here. I know that it is possible to prostitute the word, even in the religious use of it, until it becomes only another name for an excitement, which is as much physical as spiritual. The Psalmist uses it with the soberness and awe of one, who knows what he means when he addresses God, as in this psalm he addresses Him, as Jehovah, the *Eternal*; and who believes that this awful Being is actually speaking to him, and that he can hear his voice, if he will. ‘I will hearken what God the Eternal will speak; for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints.’ When the Psalmist prays for a revival, he prays not for any transient phase of excitement, however in itself elevated and good; but for the restoration of *life*, true life, to himself and to his nation; *life*, which shall prove itself to be life by its capacity for all holy, and just, and noble action; for endurance, resignation, courage, hope, and trust. And our own Lenten prayer, and aspiration, and struggle, should be for a *revival*, for ourselves and for others,—yea, for this whole great nation of ours,—in the same true and highest sense of the word; so that we and they may live our lives in future, be they long or short, on a higher level of Christian action and suffering, effort and aspiration, than we have yet attained to.

We can well understand how it must have fared with that gallant little band, which, on the strength of the proclamation of Cyrus, first crossed the broad desert which lay between the land of their exile and their native land, and set to work to rebuild city and temple, and restore their nation. At first they would be full of hope and courage; nothing would seem too hard for them to achieve. Then, as difficulties and dangers thickened around them, and no gleam of success cheered them on, gradually they would lose heart and hope, until they sunk at last into that condition of ‘great affliction and reproach,’ which Nehemiah’s book discloses. At such a period of lassitude

and distress, with what intense earnestness must not every true heart amongst them have prayed such a prayer as this of the Psalmist: 'Wilt not *thou* revive us again?'—revive our dying hopes, our broken spirits, our failing hearts, our flagging courage? 'Wilt not *thou*?' Is it for this that Thou hast brought us hither—extended Thy mercy to us so far and no farther, in order to make the bitterness of disappointment doubly and trebly bitter? 'Wilt not *thou* revive us again, that thy people may rejoice in thee?'

And so it is often with ourselves. I should imagine it must be always so with us, if we live long enough to make experience of life, at each and all, in turn, of its manifold mental stages. We set our faces Zionwards so gladly; we make our earlier marches in the direction of it so cheerfully. But, by and by, a change comes. The desert begins to tire; our hopes flag; aspiration droops; effort slackens. Or, to drop all metaphor, life, as a matter of fact, is, as a general rule, made up of long level interspaces, only here and there crossed and relieved by some elevation of incident, or by some special upward spring of hope and thought. These long level interspaces try our hardihood, our patience, our courage, our resolution, sorely. The cry of the heart then is, or at least ought to be, 'Wilt not thou *revive* us again?' For what we want is *life*, *more* life,—*life* in that truest sense of the word which I have already explained to you; *life* proving itself to be life by its power of endurance, of effort, of aspiration. And who can give us of this life, and to whom shall we go for it, and where is the fountain of it? Is there any reason why the '*Thou*' of our text should be less emphatic to us than it was to the Psalmist? Let the Cross of Christ answer the question. If God could be thought of and trusted by the Psalmist, as a '*Saviour*,'—how much more by *us*! If the Psalmist might pray, 'Wilt not *thou* revive us?'—much more may we do so: or, in the even yet more pathetic language of another psalmist, thus: 'My soul cleaveth unto the dust; quicken thou me according to thy word.'

Now the advantage of such a season as this of Lent,—a season set apart for special prayer, and searching of heart, and amendment of life,—is that, where there *is* a feeling of slackness and failure such as I have just described, it meets it, and welcomes it, and sustains it, and guides it; and where there is no such wholesome feeling of inward concern and self-censure, it tends to awaken, and foster, and stimulate it. And I am very anxious—more anxious this year, I think, than ever,—that we should use the advantage of the season to the full; more anxious, because the growing years bring with them increasing reason to justify the wisdom of the Church in appointing such a season. ‘Good Churchmanship,’—as I understand that often misused phrase,—consists not in fighting for the Church as an Institution (though it may be necessary at times to do *that*), nor in joining associations which are organized for such fighting (though it may not be wrong to do *that*); *not* in these things, nor in anything like these; *but* in following faithfully and loyally, though not blindly nor slavishly, the guidance of the order of the Church, as a help to a true and devout life. In *this* sense I would to God we were all better Church people, because we should then also be better Christians,—more worthy followers and disciples of Jesus Christ.

And, therefore, dear brethren, let me intreat you this morning, at this first Sunday Service of the present Lent, to make full use of the season according to the intention of our own beloved Church, which, in this matter, does but follow the usage of the Universal Church, Eastern and Western alike, from time immemorial. But now, if you go on to ask me, as you have a perfect right to do, what I mean practically, when I urge you to make full use of the season according to the intention of our Church, my answer must be this: Let us try, first of all and above everything else, to keep steadily in view the two main thoughts which are comprised in our text,—‘Wilt not *thou* *revive* us again?’—the two thoughts being these: First, that we need,—we *all* need,—who is there here who does not need?—more *life*,

more *true* life ; and, secondly, that God alone can give us this life,—that God alone can quicken our souls out of the death of sin and self into the life of righteousness and sacrifice. Now, provided these two thoughts are kept steadily in view, and worked steadfastly towards,—it is not for *me* to lay down minute rules and petty regulations for the effectuation of the desired object. Let every soul aspire and strive, *in freedom* ; but only let it *aspire and strive*. What little I can add in the way of practical hint and suggestion I will add in the form of question and query for your own private consideration, and so take leave of the subject, commending you most earnestly to the loving good will and grace of our Saviour God. I will content myself with just three such queries on the present occasion.

First,—Can we (due regard being had to health and other things) put a little more self-denial and effort into our religious exercises and devotions ; for example, by rising earlier, in order to give more time to private prayer and religious reading ; by coming to the Daily Services in Church, and to the Early Communion on Sundays ; or in other ways, which will be sure to suggest themselves to us, if we are in earnest ?

Secondly,—Can we see our way to embarking on a crusade, —a truly holy war,—against some besetting sin, or fault, or failing, of our own ; with a determination to suppress it and stamp it out ;—or to denying ourselves some little innocent indulgence, for the sake of self-discipline and the love of Christ ; —or to applying the Cross practically to ourselves in any other special way whatever ?

Thirdly and lastly,—Can we cut out for ourselves, or anyhow aid in, any enterprise of Christian philanthropy, having for its object the bettering of the physical, social, intellectual, or religious condition of our fellow-men, around us or at a distance ; some enterprise which we can help and forward by money, by prayers, or by personal labour and toil ; and this, in the recollection, and under the inspiration of the Saviour's words :



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‘Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.’ And may I suggest for your consideration these two enterprises : Bishop Callaway’s Mission Work in Africa, and the work of the Church of England Temperance Society, here in Leicester ?

## SERMON XVI.

SIN.

I TIMOTHY i. 15.

Sinners, of whom I am chief.

ST. PAUL'S life and character and teaching furnish a literally inexhaustible theme for sermons. We have studied them under several aspects quite recently ; and yet we seem only to have grazed the edge of the subject. To-night I purpose to use the six words of my text, as a guide to some reflections, which may, I hope, be found suitable and serviceable at this season of Lent. The whole passage, context and all, runs thus : ' And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry : who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious : but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners ; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting. Now unto the King, eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.'

I want to speak to you, then, about that word '*sinner*;' and I want to guide myself by St. Paul's own personal experience in speaking to you about it: '*Sinners, of whom,*' says he, '*I am chief.*'

Let us begin by thinking what St. Paul could possibly mean by calling himself the '*chief of sinners.*'

We know very well that he did *not* mean, that, either before his conversion or since, his life had been anything but most decorous and respectable. As I reminded you the other day, he could say of himself in the presence of bitter enemies, who would be keenly eager to give the lie, if they could, to his words: '*Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God unto this day.*' And, in writing to friends, he could describe himself in those early years before his conversion, as '*touching the righteousness which is in the law blameless.*' In fact, it had been with Saul of Tarsus as with the rich young man in the Gospels, who could say to Jesus with perfect truth: '*All these things,*'—all these commandments,—'*have I kept from my youth up;*' and of whom it is written, that '*Jesus, beholding him, loved him.*'

It is equally certain that he did not mean, that his life had ever been careless, and thoughtless, and worldly. He speaks of himself in one of his Epistles as '*profiting,*' that is, making progress, '*in the Jews' religion above many my equals,*' that is, my contemporaries,—'*in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.*' It was not only that his character had always been most respectable, and his life most decorous. He had also been a very religious man; religious after a wrong pattern of religion, it is true,—but still thoroughly and ardently religious after the common type and pattern of the day. As he says of himself: '*After the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee.*' Doubtless the rich young man's touching question, addressed to Jesus: '*What lack I yet?*'—meaning: '*I lack something: can you tell me what it is? I am not at rest: can you tell me how I am to find the*

rest which I lack?'—doubtless *this* had its counterpart in Saul's inward consciousness; and more and more so, as time went on, and he came within the range of Christian influences, such as Stephen's preaching and Stephen's death. But *this* does not in the least interfere with the fact that, from his boyhood upwards, he had been remarkably religious after the Pharisee type of religion.

And yet this man of blameless life and strict religion,—writing quietly in advancing years to a favourite friend and pupil,—can speak of himself as the 'chief of sinners.' What *can* he mean by such language?

One thing is already quite clear. St. Paul must have thought of '*sin*' in a way very different from that in which most of *us* are in the habit of thinking of it. Let us consider for a moment what we mean by the word '*sin*.' We mean, do we not, transgression of law—violation of God's commandments—breach of some outward rule of life. To *us*, the 'chief of sinners' would be a man of utterly profligate and vicious life, who had broken the commandments of God in the most reckless and high-handed way. And so little does our notion of 'the chief of sinners' agree with what we know about St. Paul, that, when he calls himself so, while we admire his humility, we barely give him credit for sincerity. He can scarcely have meant it, we think. Or if he meant it at the moment under the pressure of the recollection of his old persecuting days, it was but as the shadow of a passing cloud, which is soon gone and leaves not a trace of itself behind.

The context shows us, that the recollection of those old persecuting days was indeed lying at the moment like lead upon St. Paul's conscience. In the verses which I read you just now, he calls himself, you will remember, 'a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious.' But I am sure we shall make a great mistake, if we resolve *that* 'I am chief' of our text into a passing pang of pain, shot into his mind by the sudden recollection of those old days, when, as the historian says, 'he

made havoc of the Church,' and 'breathed out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord.'

We strike here upon a vein of thought, which ought to be of the deepest interest to us all, as it is certainly of the utmost concern to us all. At this season of the year we are taught to pray: 'Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of thee, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness.' Every time we meet in Church for the worship of God, we begin with a confession of sin, in which we describe ourselves as 'miserable offenders.' Nay more, and stranger still, when we come to the Holy Communion, our language takes a still lower range of contrition and self-abasement. *There* we are taught to say: 'We acknowledge and bemoan our manifold sins and wickedness, which we, from time to time, most grievously have committed, by thought, word, and deed, against thy Divine Majesty, provoking most justly thy wrath and indignation against us. We do earnestly repent and are heartily sorry for these our misdoings; the remembrance of them is grievous unto us; the burden of them is intolerable.' Are these empty words? Do we *mean* them, when we say them? Are we *intended* to mean them? And why, above all, at the Holy Communion, where presumably the best and most serious of us are present, should language of such deep penitence be put upon our lips? It seems as if the answer to such questions as these might help us to understand St. Paul's experience: 'Sinners, of whom I am chief.'

None of us would dream of denying the fact of our sinfulness. That we are sinners, we all confess. But the confession is often a very hollow one; means very little; means often only *this*,—that we know we are not perfect, but we believe we are not worse than most people, and are a good deal better than some, and may reasonably expect to do well enough at the last. That St. Paul should speak of himself as the 'chief of sinners,' seems to persons, who are thinking thus of sin and

meaning no more than this by their confession of sinfulness, only an outrageous extravagance of language,—a temporary fit of morbid self-reproach.

In claiming you, then, *all*, dear brethren, as fellow-sinners with myself, I am going upon ground which is confessedly common to us *all*, from the youngest to the oldest, though the confession may mean far less than it ought to mean to *many*, and, doubtless, does not mean all that it should mean to *any* of us. Would that, to-night, I might be enabled to make the confession more real, more full of meaning, to us all; that so, also, the prayer for forgiveness may be made more real, more heartfelt, more full of meaning, to us all!

We may be quite sure of this, that so long as we go on comparing ourselves with other people, and judging other people, we shall never come to any real sense of sin, or to any true penitence for it, or to any heartfelt desire for its forgiveness. Such comparison of ourselves with others is utterly false and misleading. It is hard enough to judge our own selves truly. St. Paul himself is obliged to say elsewhere: 'Yea, I judge not mine own self; but he that judgeth me is the Lord.' It is simply impossible to judge other people. You can judge their actions, and pronounce *this* to be right and *that* to be wrong; but it is simply impossible to judge the actors themselves, and to pronounce upon the exact amount of culpability that attaches to them. There is only one Judge, who can do this; only One, who can measure the precise degree of guilt, which remains over, when every circumstance and element, whether of extenuation or aggravation, has been carefully weighed. Therefore Jesus said, 'Judge not;' and St. Paul, 'Why dost thou judge thy brother? We shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ.'

Neither must we rest satisfied with judging ourselves by any external standard or rule of life, whether it be the law of God, or the law and custom and fashion of the society, of which we are members. We may be models of propriety; exemplary in

every department of conduct and life. And yet *that* may be true of us, which Jesus said was true of the religious world of his own day : ' This people honoureth me with their lips ; but their heart is far from me.' We have every reason to think, that the chief priests and elders of the people, who came to Jesus in the temple on the last day of his public ministry with the question, ' By what authority doest thou these things ? '—were eminently respectable and virtuous men. Yet it was to them that Jesus said : ' Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.'

For indeed, this terrible matter of sin goes far deeper than outward conduct. Outward conduct may reveal the depths of sin within,—may reveal them to the man himself, as well as to the world around. But no outward conduct is a measure of sin. Judged by outward conduct one would have said of St. Paul, that he was as near perfection as a man could be. Yet his own verdict upon himself is expressed in the words of our text : ' Sinners, of whom I am chief.' We dismiss, then, all comparison of ourselves with other people, as any assistance whatever towards a correct estimate of our own sinfulness. We dismiss, also, all comparison of ourselves with a mere outward rule of life ; as though this could be anything like a sufficient assistance towards a correct estimate of our own sinfulness. The former is utterly misleading ; the latter is inadequate. The latter may end only in the Pharisee's prayer—if prayer it can be called, which *prayer* is none : ' God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.'

At this point of our inquiry we must try to get nearer, if we can, to St. Paul's experience. The recollection of those old persecuting days was lying, as we have seen, very heavily on his conscience, when he wrote the words of our text ; not heavily in the sense of making his forgiveness doubtful, but heavily in the sense of revealing the possibilities of sin within. When he came to himself in the moment of his conversion, the fact that

he had been a persecutor of the disciples of Christ, fancying all the while that he was doing God service, must have made the first rude breach in the self-righteousness of Saul the Pharisee. Time and thought would only enlarge that breach and make it more practicable. If he had deceived himself so grossly *once*, fancying *that* to be right and virtuous which was so manifestly wrong and wicked, why not again? It is often such a rude shock as this to vanity and self-confidence that marks an epoch in a man's spiritual life, awakening, and ultimately transforming him. In this way it is that 'men may,' and often do, 'rise by stepping-stones of their dead selves to higher things.' We *must* learn humility. We *must* learn the bitter lesson of self-distrust. No true progress is possible, until this lesson has been learned. Happy those who learn it without any such rough blow to self-esteem as befel St. Paul!

Along with this experience—perhaps, as part of it—there went another. It was said to him in the hour of his conversion: 'It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.' The metaphor is suggested by the prophet's words: 'Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke.' The prick is the prick of the driver's goad, urging the stubborn ox forward in the true direction,—vainly resisted and kicked against. It was part of the sorrow and humiliation of Saul's conversion, that it revealed to him the painful fact, that his life and work had been set hitherto in a wrong direction; that he must break with his past, and begin all over again; that he had not only missed the mark, but had been aiming at a wrong one. Steadily did he set himself—nobly and courageously—to retrieve the past; to undo what he had done, and to do the very opposite. And again and again that old past rose up against him, to make the new course more difficult.

In this way, I fancy—or in some such way as this (for who are *we*, that we should dare to gauge the experience of a Paul?)—he seems to have come to those deeper views of sin, with which his letters are pervaded. Our English word 'sin' suggests



little or nothing, of itself, to us ; but the Greek equivalent, certainly,—and, I think, the Hebrew also,—have their meaning printed broadly and legibly upon them. To '*sin*,' in those languages, is to miss the mark ; to fall short of the mark ; to go wide of the mark ; to *fail* ; to come short of the true standard. Now the moment we lay hold of *this*, as the deepest meaning and real essence of sin, that moment self-righteousness becomes impossible to us. There may be those here, who cannot bring the sense of sin home to their consciences with any keenness, so long as sin is regarded merely as 'transgression of law ;' so innocent and blameless have their lives been. But let them think of '*sin*' in this deeper, truer aspect, as missing the mark,—failing to be *that*, which it is in us to be, and which God by his Spirit and his Providence is calling us to be,—and *who* can hold out against the conviction, that he is in very truth a sinner, and a very grievous sinner,—if not the very chief of sinners ?

And this sense of sin will become deeper, and this confession of sin will become more penitent and genuine, in proportion as we pass out of our natural darkness into the light of God, and begin to discern more clearly what our true standard is, and what our gifts and capacities are : what it is in us to be, and what God is seeking to make of us. The greater the gifts and capacities and endowments, the more keen will be the sense of failure and shortcoming. Paul, having it in him to be what it was never given to any other mere man to be, and surveying the extent to which, through failure of effort and waste of opportunity and the like, he had missed the splendid mark, is constrained to cry with the most absolute sincerity, 'Sinners, of whom I am chief.' And we, in our small way,—in proportion to our gifts and talents and opportunities, our moral and intellectual endowments,—will have good reason to echo his cry, and to wonder whether there was ever any other human soul, that fell so far short of the possibilities of goodness and usefulness that were within its reach, as *we* have fallen.

Such reflections as these, honestly pursued, cannot fail, to

use St. Paul's expressive phrase, to 'conclude us all under sin ;' to bring the weight and pressure of a genuine sense of sin to bear upon us all. Now, however painful this may be, it is unquestionably the first step in the right direction. We cannot become what God would make us, until we are made deeply and sincerely conscious of sin and infirmity, of unworthiness and unprofitableness. The prayer of our Liturgy, again and again, is : 'That it may please thee to give us true repentance.' Our special prayer at this season is : 'Create and make in us new and contrite hearts.' It is an idle mockery of God to pray such prayers, and then to repel the humbling, yet surely healing, thoughts, which should be the fruit of them.

Therefore, dear brethren, let me entreat you to-night to welcome the thoughts which I have been trying to press upon your attention, and to let them work in you towards true contrition. 'The heart knoweth its own bitterness.' *You* know, and *I* know, or at least we *may* all know, if we will, exactly how matters stand between our souls and God in this matter of sin. It is not for any stranger to intermeddle here. Each knows the dark passages in his life ; the sins of omission and commission ; the shortcomings, the backslidings, the unrealized possibilities of good, the capacities of being something which we are not, and which we have never yet striven persistently and with all our hearts to be. By all means let such sad thoughts as these have their full course with us, and work their humbling work within us. We will not put the medicine from our lips, however bitter it may be.

But we must not leave the subject so. St. Paul could never leave it so. His own personal confession of sin,—deep and contrite as it is—is set in the midst of a burst of triumphant hope. 'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners ; of whom I am chief.' Yes—'sinners, of whom I am chief ;' but then 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,' and, therefore, to save *me*. To '*save*,' that is, to heal ; not merely to

rescue from deserved punishment in a future world, but to heal here and now.

*How* the Saviour saves, and *what* the salvation is, is not now the question. Of *this* we may be quite sure :—without the sense of sin, and contrition for sin, on our part, He cannot save us. To produce this is the first step in his treatment of our case. The common, universal, essential mark of our being under the cure of Christ, is *repentance*. To-night we will look no further than this ; but will simply pray Him, with all earnestness, of his infinite mercy, by such treatment, however severe, as He may see to be best suited to our case, to give us true repentance ; to create and make in us new and contrite hearts ; and thus, by slow degrees, to work out the healing of our souls.

## SERMON XVII.

### COMING TO JESUS.

JOHN vi. 37.

Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

THE anthem which we have just been listening to, and the hymn which we have just been joining in, piece themselves quite naturally together. The second is the answer to the first. The invitation of the first is, 'Come.' And the answer of the second is, 'Just as I am, I come.' The train of thought thus suggested I propose to pursue, God helping me, this evening. And I take as my guide in doing so these familiar words of Jesus: 'Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.'

Even torn from their context—as in quotation they most often are—the words are full of meaning, full of hope, full of comfort. But in order to do justice to them—to the grace which inspires them, and to the unsearchable riches of their contents—it is absolutely necessary for us to pay some attention to the connection in which they stand. When we have done this, we shall have laid a strong and solid foundation for their needful and obvious applications.

The words, then, were originally addressed to those, who, having witnessed his wonder-working power in the multiplication of the loaves and fishes to satisfy their hunger, had followed

him across the Sea of Galilee to his home in Capernaum. The discourse—or, rather, the series of discourses—which ensued, had its starting-point in the antecedent miracle. The question that is dealt with throughout, is ever, in one form or another, *this*: ‘What is *that* which is to the soul or spirit of man what bread is to the body? Upon *what* must man feed, if he would truly live?’ In other words, “The bread of God,” “The bread of Life,” “The meat which endureth unto everlasting life,”—*what*, or *who*, is it? Whence comes it? And how is man to receive, and to feed upon, it?

Such is the general tenour of the whole discourse—or, rather, as I said, of the whole series of discourses—contained in this sixth chapter of St. John’s Gospel; discourses, addressed *now* to the crowds of simple folk—publicans and sinners and the like—who had followed him across the water; and *now*, to a more educated audience, consisting of those whom St. John, according to his usual habit, designates as ‘Jews’ (to which term correspond the ‘Scribes and Pharisees’ of the other three Evangelists);—discourses, spread, it would seem, over a considerable space of time, and spoken *now*, apparently, in the open air—and *now*, as we are expressly told, in the synagogue of the place;—discourses, felt at the time by the majority of the hearers of them to be so hard and so distasteful, that, as St. John says, ‘many,’ even of those who had been known till then as ‘his disciples,’ withdrew from Him, and abandoned Him;—but discourses, which endeared Him more than ever to his most attached followers, leading them to say—in reply to his appeal, ‘Will ye also go away?’—‘Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.’

It will be sufficient for our present purpose, if we take up the line of thought at the thirtieth verse, with the request, ‘What sign showest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work? Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’ The meaning of the request was obviously *this*:

‘Moses guaranteed his mission by certain signs ; amongst others, this of the manna. Can *you* guarantee your mission by similar signs?’ It lay in their thoughts, that Moses himself had given the manna ; though even the psalm from which they quoted might have taught them, that it was not Moses who gave it, but God. They were thinking of the manna, as ‘bread from heaven,’ given by Moses, not by God. *Moses* had *called it down* from heaven, they thought ; whereas, really, as the Psalmist says, *God* had, as it were, *rained* it down.

Jesus answers their inquiry by first of all correcting their mistake : ‘It was not Moses who gave you that bread from heaven, but God, my *Father* : He is giving you *the* bread from heaven, the *true* bread. For the bread of God is he who cometh down from heaven, and giveth life to the world.’

He is leading their thoughts back to the point at which He began. He had said at the beginning of his discourse : ‘Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life.’ The ‘meat which endureth’ is now ‘the true bread,’ ‘the bread of God.’ He wishes to lead his hearers to think what that bread is, and to long for it. He wishes them—each and all—to ask themselves, ‘What is it that *I* inwardly want? And *who* can give me what I want?’ The manna was, in a sense, ‘bread from heaven.’ But it could not satisfy a man’s spiritual hunger, except in so far as he looked beyond it, and looked through it, up to God. That which a man wants is food for his *spirit*, not merely for his body ; for, most certainly, ‘man doth not *live* by bread alone.’ Let a man feel *that* first, and then the words of Jesus, ‘My *Father*’ ‘giveth life to the *world*,’ will touch a chord in him to which his whole being will respond. That which he wants for his soul’s life must come from a ‘*Father*,’ who is *God* over all ; and it must be, not for himself only, but for *men*—‘life to the world.’

Let us ask ourselves, dear brethren, whether the real wants of our spirits can be satisfied on any other lower terms than these :

the 'revelation of the *Father*,' 'life to the *world*;'—God, *our* Father,—men, our brothers—cared for, equally with ourselves, by Him.

The hearts of the hearers of Jesus were touched, for a moment, at least—as ours will surely be touched—by these thoughts. A chord was struck, to which they vibrated. They said,—hardly knowing, perhaps, what they said,—'Lord, evermore give us this bread.' To which his answer is: 'I am that bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. But I said to you, That ye have even *seen*, and do not believe. All that which the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out: because I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me.'

Here, then, let us pause, and endeavour to unravel the many strands of thought, which are so compactly knit together in St. John's record.

Take, first of all,—what is most easily detached from the rest,—the thread of thought indicated in the thirty-sixth verse. In our English Bible the verse stands thus: 'But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not.' The word 'me' should be omitted, and the verse should be rendered: 'But I said to you, That you *have* seen, and do not believe.' They had been saying to Him, 'What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work?' And his answer is, 'You have already seen, and yet you do not believe: no such *seeing* as you ask for will ever bring you to the *believing* which you want. You are on a wrong tack altogether, so long as you are looking outside you for an evidence, which can only be truly found by looking within.'

Here, then, as so often elsewhere, Jesus pours contempt, I might almost say, upon miracles, when demanded as the foundation for faith in Him. Remember, the question, 'What sign shewest thou, that we may see and believe thee?'—is asked by

those who, only a day or two before, had been eye-witnesses of one of the most miraculous of his miracles, and had been so impressed by it that, as St. John tells us, their after-comment was, 'This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.' And this is human nature all over. A night's rest, a day's turmoil, suffice to efface impressions, so essentially transient and fleeting as impressions of sense must always be. Not on such sandy foundations as these will *He* build the Church of the future, who knows human nature to its very roots, and who comes to heal the bitter waters at their spring.

However, this is a matter which I have so often pressed upon your attention, that I do not propose to pursue it any further on the present occasion. I want our whole time and attention for something else.

Let me ask you, then, to weigh, next, the importance of the connection between the thirty-seventh verse and the thirty-eighth. The thirty-seventh verse would be rendered most exactly, *thus*: 'Everything which the Father giveth me will come to me, and him who cometh to me I shall on no account cast out.' Why? The answer is given by the thirty-eighth verse,—'*Because* I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me.' Would that the Church of Christ had always had these words of the Master in mind, when it came, as in process of time it did come, to theorize upon the Atonement! Here is no reluctant God, to be appeased or persuaded into forgiving his creatures. The Son comes from heaven to earth to do the Father's will; and that Father's will is a will to bless and heal. It is impossible, therefore,—it is inconceivable,—that He who comes simply to do that will on earth, as it is done in heaven, shall reject or repel a single soul that turns to Him. This would be to leave that will undone; nay, it would be to run right athwart and counter to it. *Therefore*, 'him that cometh to me I shall not cast out.'

Thus does Jesus, at every moment of his ministry, make it to



be most clearly understood and felt, that *his* grace is only the image and the mirror of the Father's. And this, again, is a matter which you have so often heard insisted upon, that, all-important though it be, it can hardly be necessary to dwell any longer upon it now. For the tissue of thought which it yet remains for us to analyse, will task all our powers. We have not yet touched the words, 'All that the Father giveth me shall come to me : ' nor have we yet asked, what this *coming* is, upon which so much, yea, everything, depends.

The Son of Man, we all know, came to seek and to save that which was lost. He tells us so Himself. And yet very much of that which was lost repelled, and still repels, his search ; refused, and still refuses, to be saved by Him. In the presence of a fact, so obvious yet so sorrowful, what must have been his feelings, while He still trode the soil of earth, as a man amongst those whom He was content to call his brethren ? That it did not destroy his peace of mind, is certain : for at the last He could bequeath that peace, as a most precious legacy, to his disciples in the words, 'Peace I leave with you : my own peace I give unto you.' Why was this ?

The secret of the answer is contained in the words, 'All that the Father giveth me shall come to me ; ' or, more precisely, 'All that which the Father giveth me will come to me.' There is a passage in St. Matthew's Gospel, which is the exact parallel to this in thought, though not in expression. It is the passage which leads up to the touching invitation, which is the burden of our anthem of to-night : 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' It runs thus :—'At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes : Even so, Father ; for so it seemed good in thy sight.' The words express something more than acquiescence ; positive delight in the Father's will. The Speaker of them has such boundless confidence in the Father, in his love and in his

righteousness, that He can wait in perfect peace for the operation of that will to disclose itself; assured, that *that* must be well, of which pure love and absolute righteousness are the twin and only motives. Waiting in this attitude of mind, He can justify each disclosure in its turn,—can discern the reason and the reasonableness of each; of *this*, for example, on the particular occasion recorded by St. Matthew, that the Gospel of the Kingdom was specially welcome to poor, simple, unlettered folk; that it required no passport of learning to gain admission into the kingdom of God; that it needed but the will to enter, and the way was open. In all this, the Son of Man can, on behalf of men, utter an emphatic ‘Yea’ to the Father’s will. ‘Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight.’

It is so here, in our text and its context. ‘All that the Father giveth me will come to me,’ Jesus says. Therefore He can wait, in quietness and confidence, for *that* to come, which the Father gives and will give. And what is *that*? What *must* it be in the view of Him who said, ‘God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life: for God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved’? Is it conceivable that any part of that which God loves,—and loves so deeply, that only the sacrifice of Christ can be an adequate measure of the love,—should be finally and irrevocably lost to God? The composure of Jesus, in the presence of such a miserably partial reception of his message *then* and *still*, would be inexplicable,—would be chargeable with an indifference to human sin and human suffering, which never could have been his,—if we might not believe, that He, who is from everlasting in the bosom of the Father, is so sure of that Father’s love for men, that He can trust Him with the future of that whole race, which He came, in the Father’s name and by the Father’s will, to save.

We need speculate no further on this mysterious subject. Where the Son of Man was content to leave it, we may surely

be content to leave it also. Believe that God our Father is bent upon saving *all* from sin, and from the suffering and misery which sin inevitably entails ; and we can leave the whole plan and method and time of this great salvation in his fatherly hands. For *ourselves*, the imperious call is that we should come at once, if we have not already come, to Jesus ; and at our peril,—nay, with something more than *peril*, with *certainty* of loss and sorrow proportioned to our delay,—at our peril, and worse, do we postpone obedience to the call.

But now as to this '*coming*.' Let us look carefully at the language which Jesus uses in speaking about it. First He says :—' I am the bread of life : he that cometh to me shall never hunger ; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.' Words which exactly answer to St. Matthew's record :—' Come unto me, all that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest : take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, and ye shall find rest unto your souls ;'—and to St. John's record of another occasion :—' If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.' Next He says :—' All that the Father giveth me will come to me ; and him that cometh to me I shall in no wise cast out.' Then, by and by, when the Scribes and Pharisees begin to cavil, He says :—' No man can come to me except the Father which sent me draw him. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man, therefore, that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.' Let us put these various turns of expression together, and see what they teach us about that *coming to Jesus*, which we *must* make our own, if we would be saved and refreshed and healed by Him.

Mark then, first of all, that appeal of His to the prophets, by which He strove to aid his hearers' faith :—' They shall be *all* taught of God ;' or, as Isaiah has it,—' And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord ; and great shall be the peace of thy children.' The point, which Jesus is insisting upon, is God's teaching of *all*—God's inward, silent teaching of all. To his

hearers He says : ' God *is* teaching you ; the Father *is* drawing you : look within, and you will hear the voice,—you will feel the attraction,—and *then* you will come to *me*.' ' Every man that listeneth,'—listeneth to the voice within,—' and so learneth from the Father, cometh unto me.'

Mark, in the next place, how He aids their faith again by the substitution of this simple thought of *coming* for the more difficult and abstruse thought of *believing*. So long as we are occupied with the notion of *believing*, we cannot disengage our minds from the question of proofs and evidences. We ask with the multitudes that followed Jesus across the sea,—' What sign showest thou, that we may see, and believe ? ' And, so long as this is the case, we are looking in a wrong direction, as *they* were,—looking for an external demonstration of the truth of Christianity, which can never, from the nature of things, be ours. To help his hearers then, and *us* now, Jesus gives us this simple thought of *coming* as an equivalent for the much more complex thought of *believing* :—' He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst : '—where to come to Him is evidently the same thing as to believe on Him.

Now mark, how intelligible the whole thing is thus made to us. Even a child might now understand what it is to come to Jesus. Instead of the embarrassed and embarrassing action of the intellect, dealing with evidence, we have, as an emblem and picture of faith, the movement of the body towards a person. Conscious direction towards an object, and that object a *person* ; activity of the *will*, or choice ; movement of the limbs in obedience to the will ; in a word—*volition*, or choice, first ; then *motion*, or action :—*all this* is involved in the thought of '*coming*.' We come to Jesus,—we believe on Jesus,—when we set our faces steadfastly towards Him, and press obediently after Him.

Would to God that we might all so come to Him ! What is the secret of it ? *Not*,—He tells us Himself,—an array of evidences, however impressive ; not any signs from heaven,

however startling. We may have all this,—it may be said we already have this,—and yet we may remain where we were. Even were the external evidence for Christianity much more overwhelming than it is, we should still be able to cavil and find flaws in it, and ask for something further and something more ; just as the multitudes, who had consciously fed on the miraculously multiplied loaves and fishes, still asked, when they met Him again, for some new sign that He was what He was.

Not here, then,—not in any such direction as this,—shall we find the true secret of this true coming to Jesus. Still it is to be found, where it was to be found at first, in the drawing of the Father. Instead of looking *without* for signs from heaven, Jesus bade his hearers look *within*,—look into their own hearts and see what was going on there, and whether there was not to be traced there a Divine teaching,—a drawing of the Father,—a crying of the human spirit after the Father of spirits ; and, therefore, a leaning towards Him who can reveal the Father. And so it is still. Our inmost souls still crave the Father ; still cry with Philip, at the last supper,—‘ Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.’ And why ? Because the Father is drawing us. Thus prepared, we turn to Jesus, and see in Him the Son, who alone can reveal the Father. We hear Him say :—‘ All things are delivered unto me of my Father : and no man knoweth the Son but the Father ; neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.’ And then we begin to understand why He can also say with such entire confidence,—‘ Come unto me, all that travail and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you.’—‘ He that cometh to me shall never hunger ; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.’

Even so, let us *come*, dear brethren. Come, not with mere lip homage—not in some transient fit of enthusiasm or of sentiment—but with deliberate and settled purpose ; with minds made up to take his yoke upon us and learn from Him, having weighed well, and being resolved to comply with, the

severely tender and tenderly severe terms of discipleship expressed in such words as these :—‘If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?’

The invitation is for all,—‘*Come.*’ And the welcome is for all who come,—the welcome of Jesus; and, behind and beneath that, as its everlasting foundation, the welcome of the Father. ‘Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out; *for* I came down from heaven not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.’ The invitation, I repeat, is for all,—COME. *Come to* JESUS, in that manner of coming,—so simple, so practical, so satisfying,—which I have endeavoured to make plain to you. ‘The Spirit and the Bride’—the Spirit within and the Church without,—‘say, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come; and let him that is athirst, come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.’

## SERMON XVIII.

### THE TEMPTATION OF CHRIST.

MATTHEW IV. 3.

The tempter came to him.

I HAVE so often spoken to you in previous years, during the course of the season of Lent, about our Lord's temptation in the wilderness ; that, in undertaking to speak to you about it once more, I shall venture to assume, or take for granted, some things, which I might otherwise feel bound to prove or to explain at length. Thus, for example, I shall not stay to-night to *prove* to you, that the form in which the narrative is cast, both in St. Matthew's Gospel and in St. Luke's, is the form of *parable* or *allegory* ; that the narrative must have come from the lips of Jesus Himself, since there was no human spectator of what passed there ; and that, in conveying to his disciples what it was good and right for *them*, and for *us*, to know, it was natural for Jesus to throw such a veil of allegory or parable over a spiritual conflict, which had been, and could not but have been, inexpressibly painful and *personal* to Himself.

Those of you who have ever pondered the narrative carefully, will see at once what help and relief this view of the *form* of the narrative brings. We may dismiss altogether from consideration all the difficulties that are involved, whether in the notion of the apparition of a visible tempter ; or in the translation of Jesus

from place to place ;—from the wilderness to Jerusalem, and from Jerusalem to the exceeding high mountain, and from the high mountain to the wilderness again. All this belongs,—it is obvious,—to the mere *form* of the narrative, upon which it would, therefore, be extreme folly to insist. We must look below all this, if we would get at the real meaning and the spiritual contents.

If we would understand the narrative at all and profit by it, we must accept it as the record of a spiritual conflict of the most intense severity. And this we find it very difficult to do. We find it very difficult to think of Jesus as actually *tempted*. We think of Him habitually, and readily enough, as a *Sufferer*,—a ‘man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.’ But we find it very difficult to think of Him as actually exposed to *temptation*, in the same sense in which *we* are exposed to temptation. We think of Him habitually, and readily enough, as the *sinless* One. But we find it very difficult to combine the two thoughts of temptation and sinlessness, in the way in which the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews combines them, when he says : ‘We have not an high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities ; but one who was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.’

Now on former occasions I have tried to help you over this very great and very real difficulty, by pointing out to you how closely the temptation in the wilderness is associated in the Gospel narratives with the baptism and with the accompanying sign which proclaimed Him to John the Baptist, and to Jesus Himself, the *Messiah*. St. Mark’s Gospel brings this close association out most forcibly. The words are these : ‘And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth, and was baptized by John in Jordan. And straightway coming up out of the water, he’—*i. e.* Jesus—‘saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him : and there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And immediately the spirit driveth



him into the wilderness. And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan.'

The baptism, then, with its accompanying sign, brings Him, it is clear, for the first time under the full burden of his life's work, as the Messiah. In the wilderness He is, for the first time, face to face with the thought of his Messiahship, and of all that is involved in it. Now *this*, again, is a thing which we find it very hard to realize. We find it very hard to realize, that there must have been a moment in the life of Jesus, when, *for the first time*, He became fully conscious of his Messiahship; and that his baptism was that moment. Of course, long before that moment, there were faint hints, dim anticipations, shadowy suggestions of the coming terrible glory: as, for example, on the occasion of that first visit of his to Jerusalem, as a boy of twelve years old, when He uttered the memorable words: 'Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?' But, as a rule, into the inner consciousness of Jesus, and its progressive development,—for, 'progressive development,' we are plainly told, there was,—we scarcely dare to look. Otherwise, we should see very plainly, that, at some time or other in the course of it, if He was truly *man*, He must have come to the consciousness of his Messiahship,—of what He *was* to God, and of what He must *do* for men. And then we should be very grateful to the Gospel narratives for so plainly indicating to us, *when* and *how* this consciousness came to Him, and for bidding us find in *this* the key to the Temptation. And is it not plain, on the face of the narrative, that this *is* the key to the Temptation? If not, what means the tempter's suggestion, twice repeated by way of prelude to each of the first two temptations, 'If thou be the Son of God'? Translate the suggestion from outward utterance into inward thought, and does it not resolve itself into these two questions, *each* full of storms of feeling and awe and emotion and apprehension: 'Am I indeed the Messiah? And if so, what then?'

It is not so difficult now, I fancy, to picture a situation in

which temptation might become terribly real even to the Messiah, the Son of the living God. And unless temptation was terribly real to Him, *his* temptation can be no help whatever to *us*; and in vain were written those comfortable words: 'In that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted:' 'He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin; let us *therefore* come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.'

Now let us think for a minute,—in such poor human fashion as we are able,—what must have been involved in this consciousness of Messiahship, which in the moment of his baptism flashed fully and suddenly upon the soul of Jesus, driving Him into the wild mountain region to the east of the Jordan valley for a solitude and seclusion, which had thus become an absolute necessity to Him. It is not irreverent, be sure, to pursue such an inquiry as this, provided we make no pretension to fathom or measure the mind of Jesus. He,—of whom we are taught in the most dogmatic of our Creeds to say, that He was 'perfect *man*, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting,'—does, by virtue of that reasonable soul and human flesh, yield Himself to our intelligent appreciation and our reverent sympathy. To a certain extent,—though it may be to a very limited extent,—we *can* understand Him and feel with Him; and therefore we ought to do our best to understand Him, in order that we may feel with Him. Do not let Him have to say to us, what in those days of his flesh He had to say to his earliest disciples:—'Have ye your heart yet hardened? How is it that ye do not understand?'

The question is,—How did Jesus Himself understand his Messiahship at the time of the temptation and afterwards? What did it, in *his* view, imply? We know how ill his contemporaries understood it: how ill even his chosen disciples understood it, until their eyes were opened by his death and

resurrection and the coming of the Holy Ghost. But how did He Himself understand it?

Evidently, in his view, it involved these two things at least, and beyond these we need not for our present purpose go; *two* things, I say, namely, *Power* and *Suffering*; superhuman, miraculous *Power*, and *Suffering* of the bitterest, most humiliating kind. The whole narrative of the temptation is pervaded by the consciousness of *Power*. Each of the three temptations in turn pre-supposes that He has boundless power at his command: power over nature, power over his own human frame, power over men. 'Command that these stones be made bread;' 'Cast thyself down;' 'All shall be thine.' And, though in the course of the narrative of the temptation nothing is positively said about the future of suffering which awaited Him; yet, his after-teaching plainly shows how profoundly and essentially this thought of suffering was woven into the very texture of his whole conception of the Messiah's office and work. Take *this*, just by way of reminder, if any reminder is needed on a matter so obvious: 'He began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed.' 'Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: *ought* not the Christ,'—the Messiah,—'to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?'

Here, then, in the wilderness, there is opened out to Him, for the first time, in full perspective, the thorny path of suffering, closed by the ignominious death of the cross; and, along with this, the consciousness of power infinitely vaster than was ever wielded by mortal man either before Him or since. Do we not begin to discern now the elements of a terrible spiritual conflict, in the endeavour to blend and harmonise this cruel necessity of suffering with this giddy possession of superhuman power? I do not ask you now to consider *why* the suffering was necessary. I only ask you to take note of the fact, that,

in *his* view it *was* necessary; that, in *his* view the Messiah's work could only be done through suffering and by force of suffering; could only be done by one, who should be, according to words as familiar to *Him*, doubtless, as to us, 'despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.' And this cruel necessity of suffering is laid upon One, who holds all the forces of nature and of human life in the hollow of his hand. What a situation! How perplexing! How hard to harmonize!—not in the wilderness only, but even to the very end of life! Witness those words of his, spoken in the hour of his betrayal and arrest, and revealing so clearly the conflict within: 'Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled that thus it must be?'

I shall be very much surprised, if what has now been said does not help us to realize the temptation of Jesus, as, in very truth, *temptation*. Of course, *his* temptation is pitched at a level, which is almost immeasurably above the level of our own temptations. The Messiah must needs be tempted *as* Messiah. The ideal of Messiahship being set before Him, will He shrink from it, or will He embrace it? Will He try to pare it down to something easier and less exacting, or will He accept and embrace it in all its rugged severity; never employing the superhuman power which is involved in it, to smoothe his path, to mitigate a single pang, or to diminish by one atom the load of suffering imposed upon Him? Yes; the ideal of Messiahship, the perfect pattern of Messiahship, *how* to realise it? how to embody it in noble action, and yet more noble suffering?—*that* is the question of the wilderness; *that* is the key to the temptation; *that* has to be debated and resolved upon *there*, and then pursued, firmly and fixedly, in spite of all the tempter's assaults, ever afterwards, until He can say upon the cross, 'It is finished.' 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.'

And now let us turn our attention to a few of the many applications, of which this great theme is susceptible.

First of all, then, let me point out to you, that temptation does not cease as we rise in the scale of moral elevation. Even Jesus, the highest, the holiest, the Messiah, was tempted; as truly as the vilest drunkard or profligate amongst *ourselves* is tempted, though in a very different way. 'He was in all points tempted like as we are.' Temptation never ceases, but it alters its form. As *we* rise in the moral scale by victory over it, it rises also, becomes more refined, takes a subtler and (if we may say so) a nobler form: so that to know what a man's temptations are, is to know what the man himself is. We may be known by our wishes, our hopes, our fears; and we may be known also by our temptations. But in this respect, as in so many others, 'the heart knoweth its own bitterness.' The region of our temptations is a region into which no eye looks, except our own and God's. It would be well for us if we looked more often and more closely into it ourselves, and surveyed it more accurately. To fall short of the ideal of Messiahship was the Messiah's temptation. It was sin in its most refined and subtle form of *shortcoming, failure, missing the mark*. With Him it was no question of transgression; He was far above *that*; it was *missing the ideal*, nothing more, nothing worse, a mere trifle, we might think; yet to Jesus Himself this to us so seeming trifle was agony. All those forty days in the wilderness He wrestled against it, until He conquered it; wrestled, and not in vain, against the tempter, when he came and proposed to Him this and that alleviation of his awful destiny; this and that deviation from the path of sacrifice, and of obedient cleaving to the Father's will. 'Turn the stones into bread, and so allay the pangs of hunger;' 'Cast thyself down from this pinnacle; perform some startling prodigy; and so take a short and easy cut to the homage of thy subjects;' 'Fall down and worship me: conquer the world with the world's own weapons, and all shall be thine.'

And is there not an ideal for every one of us, dear brethren? Is it not in us to *be* something, which we are not yet; to fill our place in the world, however small it be, in a higher, better, nobler way than we have yet learned to fill it? Why should our temptations, so far as we are conscious of them at all as temptations, so rarely rise above the low level of *transgressions*; of positive violations of the law of God; whether that law expresses itself in the form of '*Thou shalt*,' and it is not done; or in the form of '*Thou shalt not*,' and, behold, we do it? No wonder the record of the temptation of Jesus is a sealed page to us, so long as our own temptations are what they are, so low, so base, so degrading.

But without pursuing further this subject of the ever-changing form and ascending scale of temptation, let me ask your attention to the weapons with which the Son of God fought against temptation. We have gained some insight, I trust, into the nature of the *struggle*,—its reality, its intensity, its subtlety. We have still to gain an insight, if it may be so, into the nature of the *victory*,—the method, and the principle, and the *weapons* of it.

At a first glance we might fancy that the weapons of our Saviour's warfare are simply texts culled from Holy Scripture. 'It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.' 'It is written, again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God:' 'It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.' But a more careful study shows us, that the weapons by which the Saviour vanquished the tempter are not mere texts of Holy Scripture, but the eternal truths which are enshrined in these texts.

We may distinguish, I think, here between the previous preparation of mind by which He is, as it were, forearmed against temptation, and the actual hand-to-hand struggle with temptation, and final victory over it. The passages from which Jesus quotes breathe the spirit of the Old Dispensation at its very

highest elevation. They are imbued with the thought of God, as the living God, the Eternal One, whose words, ever proceeding from Him and assailing the ear of reason and conscience, quicken the souls of men ; whom it is the blessedness of men to trust, to worship, to serve. If in that hour of spiritual peril the thoughts of Jesus reverted to those familiar words, and rested upon them, and found strength and comfort in them,—*that* was because the words had as it were a natural affinity for his own spirit, and expressed the habitual attitude of his own mind,—because He was imbued with the thought of God,—because He clung ever in the most absolute, trustful loyalty to God,—because He saw everything in the light of God. Were it so with us, dear brethren ; had we but a hundredth part of his devotion to God, and of his constant realization of the presence of God ; we should fare in our temptations somewhat more as He fared,—we should have something of the same preparation of heart for temptation which He had.

What we want, then, against the hour of temptation, is not a facility of quoting apposite texts of Holy Scripture, but that preparation of the heart which shall make such lofty utterances of Holy Scripture ever welcome and ever congenial to us. Does it come natural to us to believe that man lives not by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God ; that we must not tempt the Lord our God, either by distrusting his care or presuming upon his favour ; that He must have the first place in our hearts, must be enthroned as sovereign Lord and King there, and that his will must be the supreme law of our lives ? Does it come quite natural to us to believe this ? Is it congenial to us ? Do we welcome it ? Is it rooted in our hearts ? Do we live and move and have our being in such a spiritual atmosphere as this ? If so, it is well. Our own preparation for the predestined hour of temptation is of the same kind as that of Jesus. But alas ! for our weak and treacherous hearts ! Who shall dare to say that it is so with him ? Would it not be more true to say

that, so far from being imbued with the thought of God, that thought only visits us from time to time to startle and terrify us ; that, so far from living our lives upon those true principles which these old words of Holy Writ so plainly enforce, we are choked with the cares and riches and pleasures of this world, and so bring no fruit to perfection? May God help us, one and all, to live closer to Him, and more above the world, in the time to come !

But how was it with Jesus, when it was no longer a question of preparation for the struggle, but of the actual struggle itself? With what weapons did He wage his warfare and conquer the tempter?

With very simple weapons, brethren ; by the aid of very simple truths. There is nothing special to his own case, nothing abstruse or recondite, in the homely truths with which He met and baffled the tempter. They are truths which belong, not specially to the Messiah as Messiah ; not specially to Israel as Israel ; but to men as men ; and therefore to Israel, and therefore to the Son of Man. They are universal truths, in which *all* men alike have an equal interest. '*Man* shall not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.' 'Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.' 'Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.' Shall He turn the stones into bread, to appease his own bodily hunger? No; for a higher law bids Him pause. He cannot see his way to it. What if it should be according to the awful precedent: 'He gave them their desire, but sent leanness withal into their soul'? Shall He cast Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple amongst the crowds in the courts below, and so startle them into accepting Him as the Messiah? *That* looks specious and plausible enough. But how does it harmonize with the universal law: 'Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God,'—that is, Thou shalt not try Him or put Him to proof, either by distrusting Him or by presuming upon his favour? Shall He accept the throne of the world on the tempter's easy terms? But what then



becomes of that one imperative, fundamental law of human conduct: 'Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve?'

: Very simple and homely and universal truths, *these!* We almost wonder why the Christ should condescend to use them. That He *did* use them shows, for one thing, how terribly real and urgent the temptation in the wilderness was to Him. In critical moments of trial and temptation it is simple homely truths, fast rooted in our minds, that become our salvation. Refinements of doctrine, subtleties of speculation, mere critical inquiries of every kind, are all blown to the winds at such a moment. Only that which is solid and real, and real to ourselves, will abide the test. That by which we really live,—that by which we live the spiritual life, that is, the true human life, which bread does not and cannot sustain,—is the 'word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God;' not the ornamental fringe and surplusage of belief, but just *that*, and only *that*, as to which we are quite sure and certain, and which the icy hand of doubt and unbelief has not yet chilled for action, nor paralyzed for suffering.

: Hold fast, then, dear brethren, those old and simple truths, which are the very landmarks of the conduct of life always and everywhere; those old and simple truths as to the spiritual basis of life, which helped even Jesus our Lord in the wilderness to cling fast to the ideal of Messiahship, and which will help us in our turn to cling fast to such ideal as our own poor lives admit of, or at least to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. Let nothing sap or undermine your faith in those ancient, universal, homely truths. Let them sink down into your minds, until they become part and parcel of your very selves. These questions of the day, these critical questions about the Bible and theology, which disturb and harass the minds of so many people,—they are but as the light ripple upon the surface of some mighty stream. Soon they will have passed away, and we shall wonder that we could ever have been

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disturbed by them. The old essential faith will settle down, perhaps in some slightly altered form, upon new and stronger foundations than ever. But nothing will ever alter, either in form or substance, those old truths which sustained even the Messiah Himself in the wilderness. Still it is true, and for ever it will be true, that man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God,—that we must not tempt the Eternal our God,—that we must worship the Eternal our God, and be his true and loyal servants, and *his* alone.

## SERMON XIX.

### THE CITY OF GOD.

HEBREWS xi. 13—16.

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly : wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God : for he hath prepared for them a city.

THERE can hardly be a soul here that will be altogether insensible to the music of these beautiful words. But we must seek, below the music of the words, for the thoughts—so fruitful in practical applications—which lie beneath.

And, first of all, let us try to take hold of those thoughts, and make them more real to our minds, by slightly altering, into stricter accordance with the original, the English dress which they wear in our authorized version.

‘According to faith died all these, not having received the promises, but seeing and saluting them at a distance, and confessing themselves to be strangers and foreigners on the earth. For those who speak thus prove that they are in search of a fatherland. And if it had been that land of their fathers

whence they came, of which they were thinking, they could have found opportunity of returning there. But, indeed, it was not *that*, but a better fatherland, that they long for; yea, a heavenly one. Wherefore God is not ashamed of them,—is not ashamed to be called *their* God. For he hath prepared for them a city.’

‘All these,’—says the sacred writer,—‘all these’—to wit, such heroes of the olden time as Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and the like—‘died according to faith.’ They crowned a life, which was according to faith, by a corresponding death. In life and death alike, the master-light in which they saw all things—their ruling principle and passion—was *faith*. And then he explains in what this faith of theirs consisted; what it was; in what sense it was to them ‘the substance’—that is, the substructure, the support or foundation—‘of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.’ And here it is plain that it is the patriarchs, as we call them,—Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob,—who are uppermost in his thoughts. For it is the exodus of Abraham from the land of his fathers, and his sojourn in a strange land, that furnishes him with his liveliest and most suggestive illustration of the nature of faith. ‘By faith,’—so he writes of Abraham in the ninth and tenth verses,—‘By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he was looking for that city which hath foundations, whose architect and builder is God.’

In one of our Articles of Religion, the VIIth, we read: ‘Wherefore they are not to be heard, which feign that the old fathers did look only for transitory promises.’ Certainly, so thought the writer of this noble chapter on the nature of faith. To him it was perfectly clear, that what sustained Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in their life-long wanderings was no ‘transitory promise;’ no mere promise of a land which their descendants should at some future day occupy and possess. They had forsaken the home of their race, the land of their

fathers,—not out of any mere worldly and visionary ambition to found a new home and become the fathers of a great nation elsewhere. No such principle as this, he argues, could have made their lives what they were. What made them what they were was that they were haunted by the vision of a better home,—a heavenly fatherland,—a city, founded not for time, but for eternity, of which God Himself is the architect and the builder. This vision of theirs, he says, was no heated fancy. It was a sober certainty. Unseen, indeed,—but none the less real, because unseen,—God *had* ‘prepared for them a city.’ And it is this City of God that he describes in the glowing language of the twelfth chapter, thus: ‘Ye are not come unto any visible and tangible mountain, such as Mount Sinai was on the day when the law was given in clouds, and darkness, and tempest, from its summit: but ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the City of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, enrolled in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.’

It was, then, the lodestar of this ‘City of God,’ this ‘heavenly home’ or ‘fatherland’—(for the word ‘country’ is all inadequate to represent the feeling which clings to the Greek word employed in our text);—it was *this* that drew the patriarchs onwards and upwards still, and made their lives, in spite of many blemishes and drawbacks, a pattern even for *us*, after eighteen centuries of Gospel light. *How*, exactly, they conceived of that City of God,—under what forms and images they represented it to their own minds,—the writer of the Epistle does not affect to tell us. He can only say: ‘They saw it, and saluted it, afar off:’—saluted it with earnest longings and eager affection and ardent aspiration. This was enough; enough, that is, to give dignity and elevation to their lives. This was the faith, according to which they lived, and in which they died. Thought and love of the unseen, the distant, the eternal City of God, *this* was,

after all,—in spite of many failures, many shortcomings, and some grievous falls,—the mightiest force that swayed their minds. This was the central attraction : all else was but the occasional perturbation of this.

I wish to trace out two lines, in which our thoughts should move to-night. And I will indicate them in advance *thus* ; and so proceed, God helping me, to pursue them :—I will call the first, ‘ Faith, the motive power in the lives of the patriarchs : ’ and the second, ‘ The City of God, the true object of faith, then and always.’

No person, not even the most illiterate, can fail to feel the charm of the fragments of the biographies of the patriarchs, which we find embodied in the Book of Genesis. In childhood we feel it, long before we are capable of analyzing it. As we grow older and wiser, we become increasingly conscious of the truth to human nature, and of what I may be allowed, without offence, to call the artistic grace and skill, which constitute at least two elements in that extraordinary charm, to which our hearts always yield, as we peruse the familiar tale.

Part of what I call the artistic grace and skill will be found in the method, throughout adopted, of placing one character side by side and in contrast with another. Abraham and Lot, Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau, Joseph and his brothers, are such obvious pairs of contrasted characters. They presented themselves, in fact and reality, to the sacred writer ; and, by a true gift of the Spirit, he seized upon them and converted them to the high use and purpose for which he wrote. At every point, the man who is walking by faith, and the man who is walking by sight, are brought into the field of view together, and the contrast of character and result is immediately felt—is felt without the addition of a single word of comment,—in a manner most instructive and impressive. Let me recall to your recollection two specimens of this, one from Abraham’s life, and one from Jacob’s.

There is ‘ a strife between the herdsmen of Abram’s cattle

and the herdsmen of Lot's cattle : ' for, as the sacred writer explains, ' The land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together : for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together. ' Uncle and nephew must part company. Common sense dictates the separation. But how ? how shall they part ?, in peace and kindly fellowship ? or in hot blood and with angry words ? Had both the men been as Lot, it would have gone hard but the latter would have been the case. But to him who was looking for ' the city which hath foundations, ' how could it be possible to quarrel over a matter affecting only his worldly interests ? He can say at once to Lot : ' Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdsmen and thy herdsmen, for we are brothers. Is not the whole land before thee ? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me : if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right : or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left. ' And Lot chose,—chose according to the dictates of mere worldly prudence,—chose ' all the plain of Jordan, ' everywhere so ' well watered, '—fair and fruitful, as a very ' garden of the Lord : '—chose *this* ; and, along with this, neighbours and companions, who are described as ' wicked, and sinners before the Lord exceedingly. ' And to Abraham was left the rugged and comparatively barren district to the south and west ; but, along with this, the peace of a magnanimous mind and the joy of communion with God. And the result was just what was sure to be the result of such a choice,—so selfish on the one side, so generous on the other. Lot and his family became involved, first in the moral contamination, and next in the fearful ruin, of the guilty neighbourhood. To Abraham comes vision after vision of the City of God, charged with words of hope and comfort such as these : ' Fear not, Abram ; I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward : ' ' I am the Almighty God ; walk before me, and be thou perfect. '

Which things are an allegory, and scarcely an allegory ; so plain and speaking are they. The Lot-choice is sure ever to

lead to the Lot-result. Ever and again, in the course of our lives, there come moments when a choice must be made. The road before us forks to right and left; and to right *or* left we *must* go. To which? Worldly motives recommend the one; higher considerations, the other. There is more money, or more comfort, or more pleasure, or more ease, or more power, or more fame, to be got by going to the left: but there is danger in the path,—moral danger,—risk of a slow downward declension under the pressure of influences adverse to righteousness. For the road to the right there is nothing to be said in the way of worldly advantage. But it has one clear mark of the will of God. The shadow of the Cross falls upon it. It is the moments of such choice as this that *make* us, or *mar* us, for ever. God help us all, at such moments of mortal trial, to choose, not as Lot chose, but as Abraham chose! Look ever, brethren, and under all circumstances, as Abraham did, for ‘the city which hath foundations;’ and Abraham’s choice, even in seasons of secret anguish and perplexity, will be ours.

The specimen from Jacob’s life presents in a far less favourable light, at first sight, the man who is walking, though in a feeble faltering way, by faith rather than by sight. I refer, of course, to the famous passage, which tells how Jacob, at his mother’s instigation, outwitted both father and brother, and won a blessing which was not intended for him; a blessing, which, under the circumstances, was a curse rather than a blessing. And so Jacob found it to his cost. It involved him in a bitter, deadly feud with his brother. It drove him, a quiet home-loving man, far from his home and all that was dear to him. It compelled him to take refuge amongst comparative strangers, who cheated and outwitted him even worse than he had cheated and outwitted his brother. It haunted him years afterwards with dread of the brother whom he had so mortally offended. It made him drag a lifelong penance, the old sin finding him out now in one way and now in another. Thus he was taught to his sorrow, that there is no such thing as a ‘pious fraud;’ that God does



not require the help of man's craft and astuteness to accomplish his purposes; that honesty is, always and under all circumstances, the best policy. And these hard lessons *were* learned at last: this cruel discipline of life *was* laid to heart and profited by. The Israel of the later chapters of the Book of Genesis is a very different character from the Jacob of the earlier. He who could say to his father, 'I am Esau, thy first-born:' and, in answer to the question, 'How is it that thou hast found it so quickly, my son?'—'Because the Lord thy God brought it to me:'—is far other than, and unspeakably the inferior of, the man, who, years afterwards, wrestled all night with the angel by the brook Jabbok; who confessed, 'I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast showed unto thy servant;' and whose summary of his own life is this: 'I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord.'

In Esau we trace no such mellowing and ripening of the character. He is the same at the last as at the first. And the secret of the difference between the two brothers is just this, that the one had caught a glimpse of the City of God, and could not forget it, and the other had not. That City of God asserted itself more and more over the thoughts and heart of Jacob. It gradually dispelled the darkness of his earlier mind. It humbled him. It subdued him. It chastised him. At last it converted the old Jacob into the new Israel. For in this principle of faith is implied an endless power of moral growth; a power most curative and recuperative, regenerating and transforming. We can trace this law of moral growth even in the lowest forms of faith; the faith, for example,—for it *is* faith,—which takes note of the future even of this poor worldly existence, and provides against its probable or possible contingencies. We all know that the formation of what we call 'provident habits' amongst the working classes, is a thing to be encouraged and aided in every possible way; because these provident habits are pledge, and proof, and guarantee, of a genuine moral advancement. If the realization of a future so limited as this can produce such

beneficial moral results, how can we over-estimate the power of moral and spiritual growth contained in that faith, which looks above and beyond this mortal life altogether, and which acts and endures 'as seeing him who is invisible?'

And now we pass for a few minutes, in conclusion, to the second of our two proposed lines of thought: 'The City of God, the true object of faith always and everywhere.'

I draw this line of thought, as you will have seen, from the language of our text and its context: 'He hath prepared for them a city.' 'He was looking for the city which hath foundations, whose architect and builder is God.' 'The city of the living God: the heavenly Jerusalem.' 'Here have we no abiding city; but we seek that which is to be.'

The first outline of that future City of God was suggested to Abraham's mind by the words of promise: 'I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.' The hope held out to him was a hope, in which not he only, nor his descendants only, but all the families of the earth, were interested. The prospect was vague, but large. Its largeness was its glory. Its power to elevate grew out of this. Nor must any after-thoughts about the City of God be allowed to interfere with *this*, its primitive and essential idea, as revealed to the loftiest spirit of that early age. Whatever else may be said about it, this, at any rate, *must be said*: The whole human race is interested in it.

The City of God, you will readily see, is another name for the Kingdom of God; or, more exactly, both are names for the same fundamental and eternal reality. *Only*, the two names present the same thing to us under two somewhat different aspects. The phrase, 'The Kingdom of God,' suggests at once the thought of the *King* and his Royal *Rule*,—its righteousness, its wholesome severity, its abounding all-embracing love. The phrase, 'The City of God,' suggests, not so much *this*, as the thought of *organization*,—that which is described in the twelfth

chapter of the Epistle, as the 'General assembly and Church of the first-born enrolled in heaven ;'—each citizen, and each nation or group of citizens, having an appointed place in the vast organism,—a work to do, a function to discharge. The two thoughts are complementary, the one to the other : not exclusive of one another, but the very reverse,—each completing and sustaining the other.

It is not difficult to see, with what ennobling power this thought must have come to the soul of Abraham : I, then,—even I,—insignificant atom of humanity that I am ; I, and my children and descendants to far away generations after me, have a place in this great city, whose Designer and Constructor is the great God Himself. We are links in the vast chain, which reaches from the hoar past to the boundless future. It is for us to receive and transmit the Divine blessing ; blessing, whose magnitude we cannot measure ; whose sweet and excellent nature we cannot forecast ; but which is, and always will be, 'BLESSING.'

In saying this, I do not think that I am trespassing upon the region of fancy at all. Study Abraham's life in the Book of Genesis, and this eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and then judge for yourselves, dear brethren. But if I have estimated Abraham's vision of the City of God with any correctness whatever, we can hardly fail to see and confess, how lamentably imperfect our own vision of that Eternal City too often is :—in *this* way, perhaps, more imperfect than in any other : that we think of our own relation to that City, as possible citizens of it, in the future after death ; but do *not* think of it, as that to which we belong now, as truly as we shall belong to it hereafter ; and as *that*, in which all men have the liveliest interest along with ourselves. Thus we are ever in danger of losing out of our field of view the very elements of life and power, which wrought so mightily for good upon the soul of Abraham. And, in so far as this is the case, we miss the regenerating influences which came to him through his faith

in that City, which alone hath foundations ;—that City which hath foundations, because it has been designed from all eternity by God Himself, and is still in course of being constructed by Him ;—that Holy City, the new Jerusalem, which is even now ‘descending,’ as John saw it, ‘out of heaven from God, having the glory of God.’

It will be a happy thing for us, and it will be a blessed thing for our religion, when we learn to substitute for our own vague, natural notions about heaven and about going to heaven when we die, the true Scriptural conceptions of the City and the Kingdom of God. It is no easy matter to do this. On the contrary, it is most difficult. The magnitude and grandeur of the Scriptural ideas overpower and awe us. We shrink from them into something slighter, nearer, more trivial and commonplace. But the Bible will never have justice done to it,—will never exercise its full native power upon us to elevate and heal ; until, instead of reading our own notions into it, as we are so apt to do, we learn to receive by steady, docile contemplation the thoughts which it was designed to impress upon us.

Meanwhile, we can at least be sensible of our ignorance, and open our hearts humbly to further light. There is no reason, why, at this moment, and from this moment forwards, the words should not be true of *us* : ‘But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly : therefore God is not ashamed of them, is not ashamed to be called their God.’ There is no reason, why, at this moment, and from this moment forwards, we should not recognize and bow before the vastness and the mystery of that Kingdom and City and Heavenly Country, to which by our spirits we even now belong ; of which we are even now citizens ; and in which we may, even now and here, become loyal and obedient citizens. There is no reason, why, at this moment, and from this moment forwards, it should not be the deepest desire and predominant longing of our hearts to be such loyal citizens of that Eternal City. Then will that City of God begin to exercise its natural attraction upon us. It will draw us

upwards out of our selfish, sinful nature ; just as it drew Abraham, and Jacob, and Joseph, and the long line of saints, and heroes, and worthies, commemorated in this muster-roll of the great and good. It will be true of *us*, as of *them* : ' God is not ashamed to be called their God.'

Ah, brethren ! we are very weak ; and the race that is set before us is arduous. God give us grace to run it steadfastly and with patience ! Let us cry to Him for the strength and courage which we so sorely need : ' Hear, O Lord, and have mercy upon us. Lord, be thou our helper.'

## SERMON XX.

## NATIONAL IDEALS.

EXODUS xix. 1—6.

In the third month, when the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day came they into the wilderness of Sinai. And there Israel camped before the mount. And Moses went up unto God, and the Lord called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel : Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people : for all the earth is mine. And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.

OUR Sunday reading of the Old Testament takes us to-day from the Book of Genesis to the Book of Exodus, that is, from the history of the family to the history of the nation. The little rivulet of the patriarchal *Family* has widened, through lapse of centuries, into the broad stream of a strong and numerous *tribe* : and now this *tribe* is to be organized and consolidated into a *nation*. A great matter *this* ; and one, in which every nation, ancient and modern alike, has the liveliest interest.

Our text describes the decisive moment, when this great work of organization and consolidation is on the point of being vigorously taken in hand. To use the language of St. Paul :

The people have been already 'baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea.' The life of bondage in Egypt is left behind them just three short months ago ; the life of freedom in the wilderness is before them. The past, with all its sufferings and degradation, lies buried in the waters of the Red Sea. The future, with all its possibilities of moral elevation, fame, and glory, stretches in their front. How to turn those possibilities into realities ; *this* is the problem which Sinai is to solve. So it was, and so we can easily see it now to have been ; but at the moment, none but the legislator himself and He who inspired the legislator were cognizant of the nature of the task, and of its enormous difficulties. Even Aaron understood it so little, that, in the absence of Moses during the next few weeks on the Mount, he was perfectly willing to listen and accede to the popular cry, in which every step already gained seemed in an instant lost :—' Up, make us gods, which shall go before us ; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.'

And the difficulties of the task *are* enormous. A horde of recently emancipated slaves is to be converted into a nation of virtuous freemen, a 'kingdom of priests.' Those of us who have watched with interest the course of events during the last few years, in France, in Italy, in the Southern States of North America, can form some faint conception of the magnitude of the task imposed upon Moses. Southern Italy, demoralized by despotism and misrule and superstition, is even yet almost the despair of statesmen trained in the hardier school and the better traditions of the North. France, suddenly released to follow her own will, is at this moment staggering under the difficulties of self-government ; threatens at each fresh turn to plunge now into anarchy, and now into despotism again. And as to the Southern, or (as they were only some few years ago), the *slave*, States of North America, it needs little imagination to realize the burden imposed upon those, whose high aim and ambition it is to convert the negro population into worthy

citizens of a commonwealth, which boasts itself the freest in the world.

Now the Israelites in Egypt, after the change in their condition which is recorded in the first chapter of the Book of Exodus, were, with one most important exception, in a position closely resembling that of the negro slaves of America twenty years ago. 'The Egyptians,' we are told, 'made the children of Israel to serve with rigour; and they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field; all their service, wherein they made them serve, was with rigour.' In plain English, they worked, like the cotton hands of a Georgian plantation twenty years ago, *under the lash*:—so much so, that, as we are informed in the fifth chapter, even the foremen who had the charge of the work were beaten, whenever the tale of bricks, or the task, whatever it might be, fell short. I leave you to judge for yourselves, whether these officers or foremen who had the superintendence of the work were likely to spare the whip, when they were perfectly sure of being beaten themselves, if the work was not done, and properly done. It is no wonder, then, that the land of Egypt was branded for ever afterwards, in the preface to the ten commandments, as 'the house of bondage;' or more exactly still, 'the house of slaves.' 'I am the Eternal, thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slaves.'

And the effect of this treatment upon the Israelites was just the same as the effect of similar treatment upon the negro slaves of America. Their life was not wholly miserable, any more than the life of the negroes was wholly miserable. They got plenty to eat, as a rule. And when the day's work was done, they would be very likely to amuse themselves in the cool of the evening with dancing and singing, just as the negro slaves used to do; so that a thoughtless, superficial observer might be inclined to say of them, just what similar observers used to say of the negroes: 'These people seem very happy and contented: this institution of slavery appears to be a very harmless, nay, a



very useful and beneficial institution : it is a great pity to disturb it : it is very foolish to make such a stir and noise about it : I wish these fanatics would mind their own business, and let this valuable domestic institution of ours alone.' And I dare say, that, at this moment, there are not a few of the negroes themselves in America, who look back with a feeling of regret to the old days of slavery, and who say to themselves and to one another, 'Well, at any rate we got plenty to eat *then*.' And this is just what the Israelites in the wilderness, every now and then, used to say to themselves and to one another, when the way was hard, and food and water ran short. Listen to the following specimens, and you will see that I do not speak without warrant : 'There was no water for the people to drink : and the people thirsted there for water ; and the people murmured against Moses, and said, Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us, and our children, and our cattle with thirst?' 'The whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness ; and the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh-pots, and when we did eat bread to the full, for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger.' 'All the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried ; and the people wept that night. And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron : and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt ! or would God we had died in this wilderness ! And wherefore hath the Lord brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey ? Were it not better for us to return into Egypt ? And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt.'

All these specimens are taken from the first year of the life in the wilderness. They show what the moral effects of the life in Egypt had been ; how it had crushed their spirit and

courage ; how it had eaten all virtue, and manliness, and self-respect, out of them. It was a wretched, degraded, spiritless crew of creatures that was given into the hand of Moses to manufacture into a nation, worthy of their great ancestor Abraham, and their still greater traditions. It took forty years of wandering in the wilderness to complete the task ; though the foundations of it were, once for all, solidly laid at the foot of Mount Sinai. But the task *was* completed at last, often by the help of very stern measures,—measures stern, but most salutary. For, of all things, what is hateful, in the sight of God and of men worthy of the name of men, is that cringing, cowardly spirit, which is always bred by slavery. And of all things, there is nothing so detestable and accursed in the sight of God and all true men, as the slavery which breeds such a spirit. The redemption of Israel from Egypt proved that God cares for the slave, always and everywhere ; is resolved to break his chains, and make him free. The task, I say, was completed at last. The nation of soldiers, who were let loose upon the land of Canaan to conquer it, was very different from the horde of slaves, who crossed the Red Sea and put its barrier of waters between them and Egypt. The task *was* completed ; but *how* ? The answer to this question is the secret of national life and greatness, always and everywhere.

The problem, I repeat, was : How to convert a horde of demoralized slaves into a nation of virtuous freemen, paying a free obedience to law, as they had before paid a forced obedience to the lash of the task-master ? The practical solution of the problem involved the application of three spiritual forces or living principles. We may describe them thus :

First,—The revelation of the new name of God, ‘Jehovah,’ the Eternal, the unchangeable, the self-same. The chapters which we have been reading in church to-day give us the history of this revelation.

Secondly,—The revelation of the ideal or standard, which the nation is to keep steadily before mind and conscience, as

the thing to be aimed at and striven after. This revelation is given most explicitly and clearly in the words of our text : 'A kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.'

Thirdly,—The actual legislation which is founded upon these two revelations :—of which legislation the law of the ten commandments is the eternal and indestructible substructure,—as strong and durable *now*, as when it was first uttered by the voice of God to Israel,—as much the foundation of all legislation now, as of the distinctively Mosaic legislation then.

It was under the operation of these three forces that Israel became and continued to be a *nation*. It is under the operation of the same or analogous forces that any nation becomes and continues to be a nation. When such forces cease to operate upon a nation, it dies. To prove and illustrate this point, so far as time will permit, and so far as such a point can be proved and illustrated,—*this* must form the remainder of our subject this evening.

1. It is impossible for any of us to overlook the importance of the words which introduce the ten commandments. 'I am the Lord,'—that is, the Eternal,—'thy God.' They are not an ornamental flourish or accidental prefix. They are the living root of all that follows. Again and again, in the course of the subsequent legislation, the words recur; *not* only in the ten commandments, in the familiar phrases, 'I the Lord thy God am a jealous God;' 'The name of the Lord thy God;' 'the sabbath of the Lord thy God;' 'the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee:' *but* even in those parts of the legislation, which are most minute and temporary, sanitary or ceremonial. Now I do not suppose for a moment that I am exhausting the meaning of these great words, 'I am the Lord thy God,' even in their relation merely to the organization of the children of Israel into a nation, or as an introduction to the ten commandments; but I would ask you to single out just one point, and to weigh it carefully for yourselves. The new name, upon which the nation is to be built, is the name 'Jehovah,' the Eternal;

to which is added the old name, 'thy God,' as a name to be cherished and dear as ever. 'God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The Eternal, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob hath sent me unto you : this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations.' Now, in this name Jehovah is involved the notion of permanence, stability, unchangeableness ; and this notion lies at the root of *law*,—of law in every sense and use of the word 'law,'—whether laws of man, or laws of nature, or laws of God. But to this tremendous, this oppressive, notion of fixity and unchangeableness, there is added the tender grace of the old name, 'Thy God'—One, with whom every Israelite and every human being may plead, as the Psalmist does, 'O God, thou art my God.' It is the blending of the two together ; it is the intertwining of the two subtle and mighty spiritual forces, implied in the two names, that made the revelation so potent for its great purpose,—the creation of a nation, that should be a kingdom of priests, a holy nation. Israel could not always reconcile the two names,—the fixity implied in the one with the grace implied in the other,—any more than we can do. But just in proportion as the two names sunk down into the heart and conscience of the nation, the nation became great. And just in proportion as the hold of those names upon heart and conscience relaxed, the nation decayed and died. For, indeed, it is everlastingly true, as one of our own poets has said, that 'by the *soul* only the nations can be great and free.' Or, to turn from our own fallible poets to the lips of the one infallible Teacher—Would Israel, or any other nation, be free and great?—*Then*, let them 'render unto God the things that be God's : '—above everything else, the heart and conscience, created in his own likeness,—stamped, like the coin of Cæsar's mint, with his image and superscription.

2. This is all too little to be said on such a subject. But it may be enough to help you to see and feel the vital connection, in which the new name of God stands to the creation of

the nation, and to the legislation, which is to be as a hammer to forge and weld its individual atoms into the unity and consistency of a nation. As to this legislation itself I shall not attempt to say anything on the present occasion. It is by far the easiest of the three points which I am endeavouring to elucidate. Any one can see, that a really free people must be a loyal or law-abiding people ; and that laws, which are to receive the willing obedience of such a people, must be founded on immutable principles of truth and justice and morality. Nor can any one doubt, that the Mosaic legislation is founded on such principles. The place which the Ten Commandments hold in the teaching of the Christian Church, is sufficient evidence of *this*.

But now, for the time which remains to-night, I wish to speak to you about the second of those three spiritual forces, in the strength of which Israel was to be moulded into a nation. I have already described it as the revelation of the Ideal or Standard, which the nation was to keep steadily before mind and conscience, as the thing to be aimed at and striven after. Our text words it thus : ' Now, therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people : for all the earth is mine ; and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and an holy nation.'

The destiny—the calling and election—of the nation of Israel was higher and holier than the destiny of any other nation. It was chosen to bear witness to the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, before all the nations of the earth ; to be a pattern of righteousness, a nation specially consecrated to God, a kingdom of priests, a royal and priestly race, each member of it uniting in his own person the attributes of a king and a priest : a *king*, to rule right royally over his own lower and baser nature ; a *priest*, to offer himself up in willing sacrifice to God. This pattern of righteousness the most choice and elect members of the nation *did* exhibit. You have only to think

over the long list of truly kingly and priestly characters—from Moses to John the Baptist—to be satisfied of this. When we of this modern day would stimulate our own appetite for righteousness, it is to the pages of the prophets and psalmists of Israel—to the Christ Himself, the root and offspring of David, and to his apostles—that we are constrained to go. Nowhere else can we catch an inspiration so strong and so pure. Nowhere else can we kindle that hunger and thirst after righteousness, of which Jesus says, ‘Blessed are’ such; ‘for they shall be filled.’

The fact that the election of Israel was what it was, does not deprive all other nations of an election of their own. On the contrary, the very words of our text, which affirm most strongly the election of Israel, do at least suggest the thought of a corresponding, though inferior, election of all other nations. ‘Ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine.’ And that which is suggested here, is affirmed elsewhere. How otherwise can we explain such words as these of Isaiah: ‘In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land: whom the Lord of hosts shall bless, saying; Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance’?—or these of the familiar sixty-seventh Psalm: ‘O let the nations be glad and sing for joy; for thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth’?

At this distance of time we have not the data for determining the special calling of Egypt, for example, or of Assyria. But we *can* discern with very tolerable clearness the election, the manifest destiny, of Greece and of Rome; the call of Greece to catch the inspiration of beauty, and to be the nurse of freedom; the call of Rome to be the school-master of the nations, with its iron rod of law and order. We can discern, also, with perfect clearness, the vast inferiority, even of such a calling and election as this, to the calling of Israel; and can therefore fully

justify the language of our text : 'Ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people.'

But if this principle of a calling and election of nations holds true of the whole ancient world, why should it not hold true of the whole modern world also? So long as national distinctions and national characteristics exist at all, there must exist along with them corresponding national duties and national responsibilities,—a standard and ideal, not so lofty perhaps as that of Israel, that 'kingdom of priests,'—but still sufficiently lofty to be an inspiration and a watchword. It is an all-important thing, surely, for every nation to know what its own standard and ideal is; and the bounden duty of the individual members of each nation to study that standard or ideal, and to make it their own. What is it, then, for England and for us?

It may be said, that it is the manifest destiny of England to colonize and subdue the earth,—to girdle it with rails of iron and steel, and lines of telegraph wire,—to convert its oceans into high roads of peaceful commerce,—to sway millions upon millions of inferior races beneath a mild and beneficent sceptre. But there is nothing in all this to touch the conscience and soul of Englishmen, or to elevate them into any ennobling sense of a Divine calling and election. It is not in the strength of such thoughts as these—thoughts so purely worldly and self-exalting—that Englishmen have done, what they have done, to make the name of England deservedly great. The inspiration that has nerved them for great achievements, has come through the thoughts bound up with those grand old English words, Duty and Justice. What is it that makes the position of England in India what it is? I answer, It is above everything else the *justice* of her rule. Why is it, that, when a young English officer is posted in some far-away station on the long and dangerous frontier which divides British India from the vast continent of Asia, it is almost ever the case, that, ere a few months have passed, he has become by common consent the general referee and arbitrator in all the disputes of the fierce native tribes by

whom he is surrounded? It is simply because, as an Englishman, he can be trusted to be fair and just in his decisions. And what is it that has made the name of Englishman dear and honoured even in the vast and almost inaccessible tracts of poor, suffering Africa? What but a life, like Livingstone's, lived under the constraining sense of *Duty*?

It is in words like these, Duty and Justice,—in the response which they awaken in our hearts,—that we English people find the revelation of our national calling and election of God. As a nation, we are called, in a special sense, to be just and dutiful. And if our children are to go out into distant lands, and among subject peoples, to be models of duty and justice there, they must be nursed and trained in those principles first at home. Our English society ought to be steeped and saturated with them. Is it so? God only knows. But at any rate, you and I, dear brethren, can, if we will, do something to cherish them in ourselves, and to diffuse them around us. Let us do so; and *that* with all our might. For be assured, that, in proportion as these high principles lose their hold upon the hearts and consciences of Englishmen, the name and fame and strength and life of England will decay. 'The kingdom of God will be taken from us, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.'

A 'kingdom of priests':—yes,—and that title belongs also to *us*, as well as to Israel; though to us, not as Englishmen, but as Christians. For is it not written: 'Unto him who loveth us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his father: to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.' I need not say that there is no contradiction, no discrepancy whatever, between our special calling as Englishmen, and our more general calling as disciples of Christ. On the contrary, the latter must and does sustain and verify the former. Just in proportion as we learn to rule, as *kings*, over our lower, baser, selfish nature; and to offer ourselves up, as *priests*, living, reasonable, and spiritual



sacrifices, in the power and virtue of the one perfect Sacrifice, to God ; just in this proportion shall we be enabled to do justice and judgment, and to walk dutifully and uprightly, and so to uphold the true glory of the English name, in whatever circumstances we may be placed,—whether at home, or amongst strangers and foreigners in some far distant land. It was so with the heroes of England in the past. It must be so with those who would be—I do not say ‘heroes,’ but—simply just and dutiful English men and women now. Be it so, dear friends and brethren, with all of us ! Amen.

## SERMON XXI.

MOSES.

EXODUS iii. 2.

And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt ?

OUR First Lessons for to-day's services bring us to the commencement of the history of the exodus of Israel from Egypt : that history, in which the noblest character of the Old Testament is the central and most prominent figure.

A great German writer on the history of Israel says : ' To fathom such a life as that of Moses would be one of the most difficult of historic problems, did we even possess the most abundant materials. For we here approach a power which produces the mightiest and most lasting results, but which works in a mysterious privacy, which in its own nature is hard to apprehend, and is especially difficult for us of a later age to penetrate. Our life moves in the midst of those very truths which received their first currency and acknowledgment from Moses and other minds like his ; we are sustained and protected by them ; we live in the hourly enjoyment of their blessed fruits. But the very ease with which we now move in their sphere tempts many, learned and unlearned, to regard their first establishment and promulgation as a light affair. How few are now able to appreciate the power which, first and alone,

grasps such truths, and is then able also to connect them with the innermost life of a nation, and thus permanently establish them in the world ! There is still great difference of opinion among us about Mohammed, although we can all judge him without bias, and although we possess numerous and well-preserved documents by which to discern his life and character. How much more difficult is it to conduct such an inquiry satisfactorily, when it concerns the founder of a religion, who towers far above Mohammed both in depth of spirit and permanence of influence, and whom nevertheless the extant historical records do not exhibit to us in anything like the same vividness and authenticity.'

In spite of the immense difficulty of the task, I propose to endeavour to help you to-night to form some conception, however inadequate, of the life and character and work of Moses. However poorly I accomplish my task, it cannot but do us good to dwell for a little while upon a noble character and upon a period, which the author just quoted truly describes as 'one of those periods with whose exceptional grandeur every good man loves to quicken his own spirit, and which he therefore desires to bring fully before him even to the minutest details.'

Even the children amongst us are familiar with the story of the birth of Moses, and the curious chance (if we may call it so) which transferred him from a poor Hebrew's cottage to the royal palace, and put all the learning of Egypt within his reach. There can be no reason whatever for distrusting the later tradition, which appears in the speech of the first Christian martyr St. Stephen, and which represented him as 'learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians.' In this respect Moses occupied the same position of advantage which St. Paul also occupied : *both* being men who had received the best education that could be had in their day. We know well to what good account St. Paul turned his education,—using it, without being in the least degree fettered by it. It would be the same,

doubtless, with Moses,—a man of far greater gifts and genius and force of character, than was even St. Paul.

The later accounts represented the life of Moses as divided into three equal periods of forty years each: forty years of wealth and position in Egypt; forty years of exile and servitude; forty years of arduous and most responsible toil, as leader, law-giver, prophet. It may have been so; but the earlier accounts know nothing of this symmetrical arrangement of the 120 years of his life. They merely tell us, that, '*When he was grown, he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens.*'

The general impression left on our minds by the life and character of Moses, regarded as a whole, is unquestionably one of extraordinary, almost solitary, grandeur, dignity, and elevation. Wordsworth's line describes it best:—

'Thy soul was like a star, and dwelt apart.'

There is not a single character in the Old Testament, that will bear comparison with it,—for purity, for elevation, for power, for pathos. There is only one character in the whole range of history, that overtops it; and *that* is more than human,—the character of our Lord Jesus Christ.

*This*, I think we shall all feel, is the total impression, which the character makes upon us. But this general impression we must try to analyze.

The very first thing that is recorded of him, tells us a great deal about the natural disposition of the man: '*When he was grown, he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens; and he spied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren. And he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand.*' The Egyptian, most likely, was one of the taskmasters, charged with the superintendence of a gang of these unfortunate Hebrew brickmakers, upon one of whom he was laying his heavy whip, at the moment when Moses spied him. The blow which revenged his brother Israelite was

weighted with all the indignation of a chivalrous nature, roused into fierce anger at the sight of cruelty, oppression, injustice.

The other little incidents which belong to the same period of his life—his remonstrance addressed to the Hebrew, who was smiting his fellow-Hebrew,—his protection of the daughters of the priest of Midian, by the well-side, against the rough and uncivil usage of the shepherds of the neighbourhood—reveal the same chivalrous nature, ready to be roused to action in a moment at the sight of anything like tyranny or cruelty, shown by the strong towards the weak, by the master towards the slave, by the man towards the woman. It is not difficult, indeed, to picture to ourselves the Moses of that early period: the strong arm, the iron frame, the fearless nature, the womanly sympathy with the weak and the suffering; and, combined with these, the vast intellectual gifts, and the towering ambition, which nothing could satisfy but the redemption of his countrymen from their Egyptian bondage. This is Moses, the *hero*; but it is not yet Moses, the *prophet*, the man of God. Had he been only *this*, he could never have carved his name so deep in the world's history as he has done. It needed the discipline of the desert, and the revelation of the Name of God, to make him what he afterwards became,—second only to Jesus Christ.

A spirit like that of Moses required taming, before it could be converted into an instrument of the highest good. His shepherd's life in the land of Midian tamed him thoroughly; tamed him so thoroughly, that, when his youthful ambition is on the verge of being gratified, he shrinks back in dismay from the prospect. 'Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?' And so it often is. The dreams of youth are often the prophets of later years; but when the fulfilment comes, it finds us keenly sensible of a weakness, for which the proposed, and in early years coveted, task seems altogether too great. And yet this very consciousness of weakness is really our strength. Moses found it so; and *we*, in our little place, may find it so too.

The key to the later years of Moses' life,—the secret of his work and of its amazing success,—is unquestionably to be found in that revelation of God, which came to him as he watched over the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, in the neighbourhood of Mount Sinai. Just as Abraham's life was made what it was, through the discovery, that God is *One* ; so Moses' life was made what it was, through the discovery, that the *One* God is also *Jehovah*, the Eternal, the Unchangeable, the Self-same. I use the word 'discovery' advisedly ; not meaning for a moment to suggest, that either Moses or Abraham discovered these vast truths by their unaided natural powers ; but because I wish you to feel, how new and strange to *them* was the to *us* familiar truth of the unity and unchangeableness of God. If we ask, how they came to think thoughts about God, which those around them were not thinking and had never thought, the answer can only be, both in the one case and in the other, 'God revealed Himself to them.'

But the *revelation* on God's part involves the *discovery* on man's part. And there is this advantage in paying particular attention, from time to time, to the *human* side of *that*, which is at once discovery and revelation. We read the Bible narrative ; for example, we read this narrative of the burning bush and the revelation of God, by which Moses the man was converted into the man of God and prophet. We read it with a strange feeling of surprise and wonderment, as though we were reading about something altogether exceptional and entirely outside the analogy of human experience. The *form* of the thing is everything to us—hides the substance from us ; and, because the *form* of the revelation is extraordinary and exceptional, we forget that, after all, light is light, whatever the form in which it comes ; and that light cannot serve the purpose of light, unless there be the seeing eye, to perceive *that* which the light reveals. To Moses, the revelation of Horeb was new light upon the *name*, that is, upon the nature or the character of God. Thenceforth he knew Him, not only as the

God of his fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, but, above all, as the I Am, the self-same, the immutable. Now the effect of this new light was to transform him gradually into another man. But in order to effect this transformation, the new light required to be welcomed, used, lived by. And this, depend upon it, even in Moses' case, was not always easy; however comparatively easy it may have been made to him by that close communion with God, which the historian describes thus: 'And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew *face to face*.'

Let us try to understand, what the Moses of the Exodus, and of the years after the Exodus, was. We have seen what he was in the earliest period of his life. What did he become? I need not say, that there was the same unflinching courage to the last, as at the first. In this there was *no* change; none was required. But the fiery chivalry of the earlier years was subdued, or, rather, was sublimed, into a singular generosity and magnanimity of spirit. Take just one example of this. For a fault very trivial, as it seems to *us*,—a venial indiscretion, we should call it, at the most,—he is told, that he must forfeit his right to lead the armies of Israel into the promised land. Not a murmur escapes him at the prospect of so sore a disappointment. His only reply is: 'Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation which may go out before them, and which may go in before them, and which may lead them out, and which may bring them in; that the congregation of the Lord be not as sheep which have no shepherd.' He cheerfully takes the prescribed steps for the appointment of his successor, and transfers some of his own functions at once to him. He bows submissively to the hard but inevitable law: 'He must increase, but I must decrease.'

So, again, that early sense of what he owed to his countrymen,—of the bond of brotherhood, which bound them together, and made them responsible each for the other,—*this*, which impelled him to the hasty deed of violence which drove him

from Egypt,—*this* was transfigured, as the years went on, into such a principle of self-sacrificing love and devotion to the welfare of his people, that he could even pray that prayer, in which surely human nature essayed its very loftiest flight: ‘Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin . . . ; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.’

At the root of this gradual transformation and growing elevation of character lay his new faith in Jehovah the unchangeable. ‘The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms;’ *there* we have his own expression of this faith,—a *faith*, which, again, strikes the key-note of that grand ninetyeth Psalm, which bears the characteristic superscription: ‘A prayer of Moses, the man of God:’ ‘*Lord*,’—that is, Jehovah, the eternal, the unchangeable one,—‘thou hast been our dwelling-place’—our *home*—‘in all generations.’ We can easily understand, what a repose it would give to our minds, what a dignity and force to our lives, to believe as Moses believed, with the strength and reality with which Moses believed, in God, the *Eternal*, the *same* yesterday, and to-day, and for ever; to believe, that is to say, with the most absolute trust and confidence in One, who is always the same, always righteous, always compassionate, always faithful and true. Nor is it difficult to understand, how the same faith lay at the root of all Moses’ *work*, as well as at the root of all that was good, and beautiful, and great in his life and character. Evidently it inspired his legislation. For the ground of all law and order must be found in the unchangeableness of God. Hence it is, that the ten commandments are prefaced by the proclamation: ‘*I am the Lord*’—that is, Jehovah, the Eternal—‘*thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.*’ Hence, too, the constant repetition of the phrase, ‘*I am the Lord*,’ that is, still, ‘I am Jehovah, the unchangeable,’ throughout the whole of the legislation, even in comparatively trivial details, which seem unworthy of a formula so solemn.



Let me guard here against one possible mistake. This faith of Moses in the Eternal God was as far as possible removed from anything like a faith in a Sovereign Will, working by irresistible decrees. The joy and strength of his life lay in this, that he felt himself at all times, *not* in contact with a Fate, *but* in communion with a living and unchangeable God, just, merciful, loving; who knew all *his* sorrows and the sorrows of his people; and to whom he could carry, in prayer, every burden, every trial, every perplexity. You will feel the truth of this at once, if you will just weigh the import of the following words of his:—‘Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee.’ ‘I will publish the name of the Lord: ascribe ye greatness unto our God. He is the Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are judgment; a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.’

All this is very attractive, very impressive. And yet even *this* does not do full justice to the impression, which the perusal of the four books which tell the tale of Moses’ life and work, makes upon us. It is not only, that our representation of the different elements which unite to make the impression is most imperfect. We have not yet touched *that*, which gives a colour and a feeling to the whole. I know only one word, by which to describe this. I should call it the ‘pathos’ of the story. And this is the last point, about which I wish to speak to you to-night. I want to analyze this pathos of the life and character, if I can. It is a subtle odour, as it were: an atmosphere of light and shade, giving depth, and tenderness, and sentiment to the whole.

You will understand my meaning better, if you contrast the life and character of Joseph with the life and character of Moses. Joseph’s character is a very perfect one; his life full of interest; its reverses of fortune at least as great as those of Moses. And yet the total impression seems to me very inferior. Now this is partly due to the magnificent scale of the work of Moses, and to its extraordinary effects upon the history

of Israel, and, through Israel, of the world. But it is also due to something else ; something, which is far harder to grasp and analyze,—this pathos, as I call it, of the whole. In the case of Joseph, there is a kind of poetic justice pervading the story ; which leaves the mind without the slightest feeling of incompleteness or dissatisfaction, when the tale is finished. It is the story of a good, and brave, and gifted man, who works his way upwards from the lowest place to the highest, and who is thoroughly appreciated by those, amongst whom his lot in life is cast. In his case, there was no need for his friends and admirers to await the verdict of posterity. The verdict of his cotemporaries was prompt, decisive, sufficient.

All this is altered, when we pass from Joseph to Moses. The joyousness and prosperity of the career of Joseph are exchanged for a burden of toil and care, anxiety and responsibility, which throw a dark shade of sadness and incompleteness over the career of Moses. Yet through it all may be discerned, clear as the day, the incomparable majesty and grandeur of the man. Like his great antitype,—the Prophet, like unto him, yet far greater,—he bears his cross, and bears it most manfully and patiently and gallantly, through all those forty years of weary wandering in the wilderness. And, when he is on the point of reaping the fruit of his labours, there comes the decree, which sounds so stern, yet really was so considerate and merciful : ‘Get thee up into this mount, and see the land which I have given unto the children of Israel. And when thou hast seen it, thou also shalt be gathered unto thy people, as Aaron thy brother was gathered.’

Then, too, there is the mystery of his end ;—laid, as he was, in an unknown grave, amidst the mountains and torrents of a strange land. Of Joseph the record runs thus :—‘So Joseph died, being an hundred and ten years old ; and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.’ Years afterwards, in accordance with the solemn promise which he had himself exacted before his death from his children, his bones were conveyed from Egypt into Canaan and buried in ground, in a

well-known plot of ground, purchased some three hundred years before by his father. Of Moses the record is this :—‘ So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor : but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day.’

Poets will sing, and do well to sing, of the glory of that unknown grave. They will say, as one has eloquently said :—

‘ And had he not high honour ?  
The hill-side for his pall,  
To lie in state, while angels wait  
With stars for tapers tall ;  
And the dark rock-pines, like tossing plumes,  
Over his bier to wave,  
And God’s own hand, in that lonely land,  
To lay him in the grave !’

But, when poets have said their say, there still is left on our minds the feeling of an utter loneliness, in those last hours of that grand, heroic, and most saintly life. ‘ *Paucioribus lacrimis compositus es.*’ We would have had a few friends by,—to close the weary eye, and lay the warrior, prophet, legislator in his grave. And yet it is this very loneliness of his death, which completes what I call the pathos of the life, and gives such force, such dignity, such weight to its total effect. From first to last, the life was a lonely one. It was well that the death should be of a piece with the life. He who had been the Life of his life, might well be trusted to take care of him in death. His own words would surely be made good to him in that supreme moment : ‘ The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.’

It would be out of place altogether to add what are called ‘ practical applications ’ of such a subject as this. Or, if we want any, his own words will be amply sufficient—words borne home to many hearts amongst us by the sad incidents and hopes of the last few days : ‘ So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.’

## SERMON XXII.

### THE TWO KINGDOMS.

JOHN xix. 14.

Behold your king !

THE words are words of scorn, at once angry and bitter. Pilate is exasperated by the obstinate determination of the Jews to have the blood of Jesus. He has an infidel's contempt for the bigotry and fanaticism of these fierce zealots. He has the contempt of a Roman soldier for conquered provincials, writhing in vain under the heel of the conqueror. And yet, for the moment, these fierce fanatics are too strong for him. *They* know their own mind, and *he* does not know *his*. He prepares to yield ; but in yielding he will wound. Hence the sarcasm : ' Behold your king ! ' ' This crown of thorns, this faded purple, this bleeding form,—such are the royal insignia of *your* king ! Fit king for such subjects ! '

The taunt is met with the renewed cry, ' Away with him ! away with him ! crucify him ! ' ' Shall I crucify your king ? ' he asks ; to which the answer of the chief priests is, ' *We have* no king but Cæsar.' Even Pilate, with all his scorn and hatred of the chief priests, could hardly have been prepared for the incredible baseness of such an answer. It was tantamount to a renunciation of their whole national history and national life. ' Henceforth,' they in effect said, ' we are content to be known,

no longer as the servants of Jehovah, but as the subjects—the loyal subjects—of the Roman emperor.’ And Pilate hastened to seal the unexpected surrender—to cement the unholy compact—in the blood of Jesus. To win from the accredited leaders and representatives of the Jewish nation such an act of voluntary homage to imperial Rome, was well worth the sacrifice of one innocent person. The Roman instinct of policy and government gets the better of Pilate’s anger and contempt. He launches no more sarcasms against these (in his view) wretched fanatics; but simply delivers their victim into their hands, to work their cruel will upon Him.

Thus, in this supreme moment, which (humanly speaking) sealed the fate of Jesus, there come into clear view two distinct kingdoms,—two absolutely antagonistic forms of royal power: *one*, represented by the crown of thorns,—*the other*, by the imperial sceptre of Rome; *one*, impersonated, then and ever since, in Jesus the crucified,—*the other*, for the moment, in a Tiberius. And the question—not *then* only, but at all times and for all men—is: ‘To which of these two diverse and antagonistic kingdoms shall we yield the homage of our hearts,—the indivisible loyalty of soul and will?’

How the chief priests answered the question for themselves, we have seen. They chose Tiberius in preference to Jesus,—Tiberius, who, above all other occupants of that seat of almost universal empire, united consummate craft and sagacity with consummate wickedness and cruelty. Of them, and of their infatuation, we need say no more. The lesson is for all times. The trial is for *us*; for those who shall succeed us, as well as for those who have preceded us.

There is a power, which addresses itself to the eye,—which dazzles, and by dazzling attracts. And, again, there is a power which addresses itself, not to the eye of sense, but to the spirit within; and which attracts, not by any external dazzling, but by an interior subjugation, to which conscience and heart yield themselves freely and joyfully. The empire of Rome was of the

former kind; the empire of Jesus Christ was, and is, of the latter. Power of the former kind is essentially local and fleeting and transient; power of the latter kind may be universal and eternal. The Kingdom of Christ has upon it the marks, which indicate, to say the very least, the *possibility* of such universal and everlasting empire. And such, St. Paul says, his kingdom shall be: 'At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.' The ruins and débris of the Roman empire are all that survives to show, *where* and *what* it once was. Christ's kingdom grows stronger and stronger, larger and larger, with every passing century. Even now, it is only in its infancy. What *will* it be?

Now this kingdom is founded upon service and sacrifice. He stoops to conquer. He stoops to the likeness of men, in order to conquer humanity for God. The cross is his passport to the throne of our hearts. In our best moments we all acknowledge his right to reign over us. But ever and again, side by side with that kingdom of his, which is *not* of this world, there comes into view a kingdom which *is* of this world: the allurements of wealth, or pleasure, or interest, or power,—the life lived to self, and not to God. This is *our* 'Cæsar,' brethren. It is of *this*, that we find ourselves, again and again, tempted to cry, 'We have no king but Cæsar.' Yet what is this, practically, but the same evil cry, which the chief priests raised in Pilate's ears on that black and accursed day, when they rejected Jesus, and did homage to Tiberius?

More than this. According as we yield ourselves to the sway of the one kingdom or of the other,—the kingdom which *is* of this world, or the kingdom which is *not* of this world,—accordingly do we exercise, in our own small place and day, the powers of that kingdom. They transmit themselves through us as their agents, and we become workers for the one kingdom or the other, as the case may be. Will we offer ourselves

to Christ, our rightful king, in a truly loyal allegiance? Will we accept *his* law of service and sacrifice, as the true and supreme law of our own lives? Will we listen and obey, when He says to us, as He *does* say to us: 'Whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister; and whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all: for even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.' Will we do this? Forthwith, behold, we become, as it were, a medium of communication between Him and the world around us. He works through us. He seats us, if we may say so, on the lowest step of his own throne. We share his present power, even now; as we shall share his future, final triumph, hereafter.

If, on the other hand, we yield ourselves to the Cæsar of this world, and allow him practically, in any one or more of his many forms, to rule over us; we do so, not for ourselves only and to the peril of our own souls, but for others also and to the peril of theirs. '*No man liveth to himself.*' No man can so isolate himself from his fellows, that no influence, either for evil or for good, shall pass through him to them. No man can either ruin or save his own soul, without doing something, it may be *much*, to ruin or to save the souls of others.

The picture may seem to some overdrawn. True: it *is* an ideal picture. In actual experience, no life is wholly surrendered to the sway, either of the Kingdom of Christ, or of the kingdom of this world. Motives, actions, characters,—all, in real life, are, more or less, *mixed*. The worst have traits of goodness. The best bear at least the scars of conquered evil. The pure light of Christ's Kingdom, passing through the refracting medium even of the noblest and loftiest characters, is crossed by many a band of inky darkness. Yet still, the weight of every human soul—the momentum of every human life—is flung distinctly and unmistakably, in its net result, either on Christ's side or on Cæsar's.

Brethren, which of these two alternatives do we embrace?

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Into which of the two scales are we flinging the weight, such as it is, of our own poor lives? What sadder issue can we imagine,—what more terrible spectre can we conjure up,—than *this*: To waken at last out of life's often feverish dream, and discover, in the clear light beyond the grave and before the judgment-seat of God, that it has been all one long *mistake*,—one vast failure; that we have been fighting all the time on the wrong side; hindering, not helping, the cause of Christ; helping, not hindering, the cause of his enemies? Choose *rightly*, brethren; and choose *now*. So the shame, and confusion, and dismay, of that dreadful discovery shall not be ours.



## SERMON XXIII.

### CHRIST CRUCIFIED.

GALATIANS iii. 1.

Before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth crucified.

I TAKE it for granted, that, in the course of the last few days, we have all, or almost all, listened within these walls to the Passion Music of the great German composer. It is an experience, which we may be thankful to have made. But we must not allow such an unwonted—such an exceptional experience,—to pass by, with nothing to show for it, except the transient pleasure—a very refined pleasure, I admit—of listening to *such* music, under *such* circumstances, with *such* accompaniments and accessories of place and instrument and sacred association. We must ‘gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.’ And, the theme of the music being what it is, it cannot be other than well for us to gather up these fragments on this day, which, of all the days of the year, we associate specially with the Passion of our Lord.

The Passion Music, then, to which we have been listening, may, at the first superficial glance, be described as a comment upon, and an exposition of, the twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh chapters of the Gospel according to St. Matthew. What commentators and expounders do for the sacred text by force of words and learning, the great German has done for it by the power of

song;—a power far mightier in its own way than the power of words and learning. As we now read the sacred text quietly to ourselves over again, the musical exposition comes repeatedly back to us, with all its wonderful lights and shades of meaning and expression. We seem to hear the eager question of the disciples,—a question almost childish in its eagerness :—‘ Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the passover?’ We seem to witness the horrible mocking insolence of the chief priests and elders and scribes, spitting in his face, buffeting Him with their fists, striking Him with their open hands, and saying,—as they swarmed round Him and struck Him, from one side and another, in quick succession,—‘ Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, who is he that smote thee?’ We seem to hear, *first*, the deep, strong, startling, unanimous shout of the mob for ‘ Barabbas :’ and *then*, immediately afterwards, the surging, confused, angry cry of the same mob : ‘ Let him be crucified.’ The whole scene becomes, in a moment, almost painfully vivid and real to us;—the whole story, full of colour and passion and pathos.

I think we ought to be very grateful for this realistic force of the Passion Music. The words of the sacred narrative are so familiar to us, that they often pass over our minds without making the faintest impression upon us. It is well that the bondage of this familiarity should be broken for us. It is well that we should be compelled to *feel*, that, on a certain day, in a certain place, these terrible events did actually happen; and did actually happen, with all the rough, coarse, cruel, and brutal accompaniments, which the Evangelists describe. For the Passion Music adds nothing, exaggerates nothing. It only helps us to realize *that*, which the Evangelists assure us did actually happen. And, in doing this, it throws the softening veil of music over all. Could we really set it before us, as it did actually happen, the scene would be too horrible for us.

But whilst we may well be grateful to the great musician for doing this for us, we shall feel, I imagine, more than ever

grateful to the Gospel narratives for being exactly what they are. And what are they? The Passion Music makes us feel what they are, better than anything else could. How calm they are! how dignified! how self-restrained! how wisely and intentionally colourless! how unimpassioned! how statuesque! This is the secret of their abiding power over us. We should weary of them, were they otherwise. Suppose, for example, that they were steeped in colour and passion; as the music, which dramatizes them, is. How intolerable they would become to us! The most devoted worshipper of the Passion Music would not wish to hear it every day, or every week, or even every month of his life. Once or twice in every year would be quite sufficient for him. But we can read the evangelical narratives of the Passion of our Lord without ever growing weary of them; and, when we have finished them, we can begin them at once, without weariness or satiety, over again. Though so colourless, so passionless, in themselves, they lend themselves so readily to the intellect and feelings of the reader, that he finds something new in them on every perusal. Now, that this should be so, seems to me an astonishing proof of the truth of the facts recorded in them, and of the inspiration which watched over their production. A mere ordinary writer, or even a whole catena or generation of writers, would never have written so, on a subject which must have stirred heart and soul and conscience to their very depths. Was it the surpassing grandeur and importance of the events, which they recorded, that awed the writers into this strange and unwonted reticence? Or was it, over and above this, that a Higher Power guided their pens and sealed their lips? Explain it as we will, the fact is most impressive.

But the Passion Music is not merely *realistic*, in the sense of making the Gospel narrative so awfully real and vivid to us. It is also coloured, from first to last, with the most profound religious feeling. I need only remind you of those two exquisite passages, *one* beginning: 'Jesus, Saviour, I am

thine ;' and the other : 'See the Saviour's outstretched arm ;' and you will at once understand what I mean. The whole soul of the great composer evidently went into such passages as these. He not only realizes the scene ; he makes equally real the impression, which the scene made upon himself. He not only gives out the text in clear, bold characters, so that any one may read it : he also *preaches* from it,—both 'evidently setting forth' the cross, and appealing to heart and conscience through it. Working, like all other true artists, whether with form and colour, like the great painters of Italy and Germany, or with musical sound, like Handel and Mendelssohn,—working with a definite aim and object, he has a message for us. 'Being dead,' all those years ago, 'he still speaketh.'

Most of us know, by engravings, the famous picture of the crucifixion,—with the motto, 'It is finished,'—by the great painter, Albert Dürer, the fellow countryman of the composer of the Passion Music. Did you ever look at the worst engraving of that famous and noble picture, without feeling that the artist who painted it had a message for *you*,—was preaching to *you*,—out of the depth of his own convictions ? Look at it again : mark the calm, majestic countenance, so full of repose even in death. What does it say ? Or what does the artist say to us through his own exquisite handiwork ? Does he not reiterate and emphasize the Saviour's own message : 'Come unto me, and I will give you rest' ? And the writer of the Passion Music has, it seems to me, the same message for us, however diversely expressed. Amidst all his varied tones, we still seem to hear the same fundamental key-note, ever and again returned to : 'Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me ; and ye shall find rest unto your souls.'

On this day, of all days, there is no thought that one would more wish to emphasize than this. And I will emphasize it first, not in any words of my own (*they* are all too weak), but in the words of one, who is gone to his rest, gallant soldier of Christ that he was, Charles Kingsley :

‘Since Christ hung upon that torturing cross, sorrow is divine, godlike, as joy itself. All that man’s fallen nature dreads and despises, God honoured on the cross, and took unto Himself, and blest, and consecrated for ever. And now, blessed are the poor, if they are poor in heart as well as purse, for Jesus was poor, and theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are the hungry, if they hunger for righteousness as well as food, for Jesus hungered, and they shall be filled. Blessed are those who mourn, if they mourn not only for their afflictions, but for their sins, and for the sins they see around them ; for on this day Jesus mourned for our sins : on this day He was made sin for us, who knew no sin, and they shall be comforted. Blessed are those who are ashamed of themselves, and hate themselves, and humble themselves before God this day ; for on this day Jesus humbled Himself for us, and they shall be exalted. Blessed are the forsaken and despised. Did not all men forsake Jesus this day, in his hour of need ; and why not thee, too, thou poor deserted one ? Shall the disciple be above his master ? No ; every one that is perfect must be like his master. The deeper, the bitterer your loneliness, the more are you like Him who cried upon the cross : “ My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ? ” He knows what that grief too is like. Though all forsake thee, He is with thee still ; and if He be with thee, what matter who has left thee for a while ? Ay, blessed are those who weep now, for they shall laugh. It is those whom the Lord loveth that He chasteneth ; and because He loves the poor He brings them low. All things are blessed now *but* SIN ; for all things except sin are redeemed by the life and death of the Son of God. Blessed are wisdom and courage, joy and health and beauty, love and marriage, childhood and manhood, corn and wine, fruit and flowers ; for Christ redeemed them by his life. And blessed, too, are tears and shame ; blessed are weakness and ugliness ; blessed are agony and sickness ; blessed the sad remembrance of our sins, and a broken heart, and a repentant spirit. Blessed is death,

and blessed the unknown realms where souls await the resurrection day, for Christ redeemed them by his death. Blessed are all things, weak as well as strong. Blessed are all days, dark as well as bright, for all are his, and He is ours ; and all are ours, and we are his, for ever. Therefore sigh on, ye sad ones ; and rejoice in your own sadness ; rejoice that you are made free of the holy brotherhood of mourners, that, you may claim your place, too, if you will, among the noble army of martyrs. Rejoice that you are counted worthy of a fellowship in the sufferings of the Son of God. Rejoice, and trust on ; for after sorrow shall come joy. Trust on ; for in man's weakness God's strength is made perfect. Trust on, for death is the gate of life.'

To these brave and beautiful words of Kingsley's I need hardly add any of my own. They point clearly out to us that way of peace, into which the Crucified calls us ; that way of peace, which, amidst the infinite variety of the outward forms and fashions of life, is ever in spirit one and the same for all. Joyful or sorrowful, honoured or despised, rich or poor, healthful or sick, succeeding or failing, surrounded by friends and comforts, or bereaved of all friends and destitute of all human comfort ; still He says to us : ' Take my yoke upon you ; learn from me ; and ye shall find rest unto your souls.'

It is *his* secret of that conquest of the world, of which He said to his disciples on the night before He suffered : ' In the world ye shall have tribulation ; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.' That the world of outward things galls us, oppresses us, disappoints us, threatens to crush us,—we all know by sad experience. What, then, is the yoke, by which we may hope to ease the galled shoulder,—to lift the almost intolerable weight,—to drag the ponderous load ? ' *My yoke,*' Christ says in reply :—' Take my yoke upon you, and learn from Me.'

What that yoke was, the cross revealed. Its first and last

words were, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do : ' 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.' Look through these words, dear brethren ; look through these words of the dying Christ ; look through them into the heart, which they reveal ;—and we shall see, what his yoke is, and how it was that He conquered the world. In that one word, 'Father,' we find the transforming power, which can convert *our* wintry world too into summer for us. In the light of that word, men become our brothers ; the whole area of life, from first to last, a scene of fatherly discipline,—discipline, most wise, most just, most tender ; and the unknown world beyond, a home and haven of rest. In the light of that word, 'Father,' I repeat, men become our brothers ; brothers, to whom we owe all brotherly help and service ; from whom we must expect little ; to whom we must forgive all. The whole area of life becomes a fatherly discipline,—an education, of which it is impossible to understand every single detail, until the whole is complete ; in the course of which we are required again and again simply to *trust* ; and not least so, when, as with Christ, all is slipping from our grasp, and we can do nothing but commend our departing spirits into the Father's hands.

Try this yoke, dear brethren ; try it honestly, earnestly, patiently : try it so, and then pronounce for yourselves, whether Jesus Christ has falsified his pledge :—'Take *my* yoke ; and ye shall find rest unto your souls.'

' " O Father, not my will, but Thine, be done : "

So spake the Son :

Be this our charm, mellowing earth's ruder noise

Of griefs and joys :

That we may cling for ever to Thy breast

In perfect rest.'

## SERMON XXIV.

### THE RESURRECTION.

EXODUS xiv. 15.

Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward.

*'THAT they go forward.'* And yet before them stretched the broad expanse of sea, and behind them lay the Egyptian host,—‘all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, and his horsemen, and his army,’—ready with the morning light to fall upon them and cut them to pieces. Can we wonder that these poor fugitive slaves, encumbered with a helpless crowd of women and children, should have cried in mortal terror to their great leader, Moses, ‘Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? for it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness?’

Such language as this is the natural language, in every age, of those, whose spirit has been broken by years and generations of persistent oppression. The slave does not cease to be a slave, the moment you have struck the shackles off his wrists. The virus of slavery has tainted his blood; and it will take years of freedom to wash it away. We Englishmen, in whose veins



runs the blood of generation after generation of born freemen, are often most unreasonable in the expectations which we form as to the immediate future of a long down-trodden and newly emancipated race. *We* can form no conception of the abject moral condition of a race, into whose very soul the iron of a heartless crushing tyranny has entered for centuries. Could we form any conception of it, our blood would boil with indignation against the oppressors of our own day,—our hearts would overflow with pity for the oppressed,—and we should not shrink from using (if need be) the strength which God has given us, as a nation, for righting their cruel wrongs. Do we think that God, who brought those poor down-trodden Israelites out of their Egyptian bondage ‘with a high hand and a stretched out arm,’ all those hundreds and almost thousands of years ago, has ceased to care for the slave and the oppressed? or that his Kingdom has become a mere fiction? or that nations which selfishly avert their eyes, like the priest and the Levite of the parable, from the sight of human suffering which they could, if they would, alleviate, can do so without a loss of moral strength,—without deterioration of that ‘*soul*,’ by which ‘alone’ (as one of the wisest of our poet-prophets has taught us) ‘the nations’ can be lastingly ‘great and free?’

But I must check myself. My subject of this evening is not this. Only, as one reads this great chapter, which tells how the Eternal God put forth of old his arm to rescue those poor slaves, and that helpless crowd of women and children, from the fierce onset of Pharaoh’s cavalry and chariotry, one’s thoughts irresistibly turn to those unhappy Christians of the East, who groan under a bondage far worse, so far as we can judge, than ever Pharaoh’s was. So *sure* as there is a God in heaven,—so sure as there is a Kingdom of Christ upon earth,—deliverance *must* come for them also. Will England bear a hand in bringing freedom to Bosnians and Bulgarians, as she bore a hand some fifty years ago in bringing freedom to Greece? Or will she avert her eyes, and refuse to lift a finger

to abate the most cruel grinding tyranny that ever disgraced the earth ;—nay, by her policy, even help to bind the chains of that tyranny more firmly than before? If the latter, ‘I can only tremble for my country, knowing that God is just.’

But we must return to Israel, and Israel’s redemption. How fared it in that hour of supreme peril with the leader, upon whose courage and resource, humanly speaking, all depended. That he bore himself bravely, like the gallant leader he was,—speaking words of hope and faith and comfort to the terrified crowd around him,—is clear from the sacred narrative:—‘Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will shew to you to-day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.’ But it is equally clear from the sacred narrative, that,—even whilst he was speaking these bold words to the frightened men and women around, and whilst he had such faith in God, that he felt sure deliverance *would* come,—he himself had not the least idea, how, or from what quarter, it would come. Behind, on the distant horizon, hung the black cloud of Pharaoh’s host:—nearer and nearer every moment it came:—and in front lay the dark moaning ocean:—and there seemed no escape:—and in the extremity of the peril, in the utter failure of every earthly hope, he cried unto the Lord:—and at last the answer came,—‘Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward: but lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea.’

And so they went forward; and Israel became a free nation—a nation which has done such a work for the world, as no other nation ever did.

The impression of that great day was never effaced from the memory, the heart, the conscience of the nation. The

redemption, of which it was the crowning stroke, lay at the root of all their laws; stood in the fore-front of that Decalogue, which has been given, through Israel, to the whole world. Still, to this day, our children are taught to recite the familiar words,—words so full of solemn meaning, not to Israel only, but to all men,—‘I am the Eternal thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.’ The great fact or group of facts, thus recorded and so recited, lay, like a vital force, within and beneath the whole after current of the nation’s history; *a vital force*, which, again and again, bodied itself forth, and found expression, through the lips of some prophet or the pen of some psalmist, and thus became, time after time, an instrument for the reformation, or even the regeneration, of the nation. Cut away this fact, or group of facts; deny *in toto* the supernaturalism, in which the sacred narrative is so profoundly steeped; and the whole after history of the nation becomes unintelligible, inexplicable. Accept it,—place it, where the narrative places it, at the foundation or fountain-head of the whole,—and all becomes clear, consistent, capable of explanation.

That which is thus true of Israel and Israel’s history, is also true, in the way of analogy, of the Christian Church, Christianity, Christendom. At the root of all lies the supernatural fact of the resurrection of Jesus. No one will deny, that, without faith in the resurrection, the Christian Church could never have been. Had the cross been the end of all, it is absolutely undeniable, that the great movement, which Jesus inaugurated, must have collapsed. The final comment upon it would have been that of the disciples, as they walked sorrowfully and despairingly, on the very day of the resurrection, to Emmaus: ‘We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel.’ It is, I repeat, undeniable and undenied, that it was the belief of the resurrection of Jesus, that gave the original impulse to the Christian Church. The words of St. Peter will be universally accepted, as giving the simplest and truest

account of the matter : 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.'

But, though this is unmistakably and undeniably true, it does not follow, as a matter of absolute necessity, from this, that Jesus did actually rise from the dead. The *fact*, that faith in the resurrection created the Christian Church, does not of itself prove the resurrection. Of course, it *is* conceivable that the first disciples were mistaken ; *thought* that Jesus had risen ; *believed*, with all their heart and soul, that He had risen ; were ready to go to prison and to death for their belief ; did actually go to prison and to death for their belief ; and yet were, all the while, mistaken. This, I say, is, of course, *just* conceivable ; and, if I am to carry your minds with me to-night, I am bound not only to admit, but to point out to you, that it *is* conceivable. Bad logic is sure to recoil in the end upon him who uses it ; and tends only to weaken the cause, which it is his object to strengthen.

At this point, then, we have to choose between these two alternatives : Either Christ did actually rise from the dead, and the fact of his resurrection converted that poor cowed band of followers of his into an army of dauntless missionaries ; *or*, He did *not* rise ;—died, like any other mortal man, and so lay dead ;—but, somehow or other, by some unexplained process, his disciples came to believe, that He had risen from the dead ;—came to believe, that they had actually seen Him alive after his Passion ;—that He had 'shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs ;'—and, in the strength of that belief, went out, as his apostles and emissaries, into the wide Gentile world, conquering it—and still to conquer it—for Him. Choose *you*, dear brethren, for yourselves between these two alternatives. *I* know well, which to choose.

But now, further. It seems to me quite clear and certain, *not only* that the faith of the resurrection of Jesus gave the first

impulse to the Christian Church, and secured it a foothold in the world,—*which no one denies*,—*but also*, that the same faith has given—and still gives—it that vital energy, that recuperative force, which has enabled it, time after time—and will for ever enable it—to purge away abuses, even the most inveterate—to renew its strength as an eagle—and to gather itself up for new victories, which may bear comparison even with the astounding triumphs of the Primitive Church. What the redemption from Egyptian bondage by the high hand of the Eternal was to Israel—*not* merely, at the moment, as putting the Red Sea between them and their oppressors, and enabling them to breathe the air of freedom, and to be trained, as freemen, for their great future destiny, *but also* as an unfailing, sustaining, vital force, ever available for the regeneration of the nation ;—what *this*, I say, under both aspects, was to Israel—*that*, the resurrection of Christ has been, and is, and ever will be, to the Christian Church.

Will it be denied—can it be denied—that to strike the faith of the resurrection out of the history of the Christian Church at any moment would have been to paralyze its action,—to make its further progress impossible? Think, for example, of the missions of the middle ages,—of the evangelization of Germany,—of the other great and long-sustained missionary efforts, which have made the continent of Europe what it is. Suppose that those heroic men, who achieved that gigantic work, had suddenly come to the conviction, that their faith in the resurrection of Christ was a mistake,—that it had no foundation in fact,—that Christ never did rise from the dead, but lies still in his grave till the great judgment-day ;—suppose this,—and what then? Do you imagine that their zeal and fervour and enthusiasm would have survived such a frightful discovery, and that they would have gone on sacrificing themselves so freely, suffering so gladly, in order to win those wild heathen tribes to the faith—*of what?* Of a *dead* Jesus,—a man *crucified* as a heretic, a blasphemer, a disturber of the

public peace? IMPOSSIBLE ! Now this, again, does not *prove* that Jesus actually rose from the grave, as the Evangelists tell us He did. But it *does* help us to realize something, which we often lose sight of ; and *that* is the impossibility of separating the power of the cross from the fact of the resurrection.

There is, in some quarters, a disposition to put asunder that which God has joined together. It is thought, that we may now safely divorce the teaching and the death of Christ from the supernatural fact of his resurrection ; that, having climbed so high by the aid of the ladder, we can now dispense with the ladder, by which, confessedly, we have been enabled to climb so high. But what reason is there to suppose, that what has been undeniably the motive force and living spring of Christianity all these centuries, can now be safely dispensed with ? Suppose it should go out to the world, as the final outcome of science and historical criticism, that Christ did *not* rise ; and suppose that this outcome of science and verdict of criticism should be accepted and ratified as the common faith, or unfaith, of the Christian Church. What then ? Why simply this : You will have killed the fairest of all earthly flowers at its very root. You will have sapped the very foundations of an edifice, which has done more for the world than all the philosophies, and arts, and sciences, put together. Now, if this *must* be done in the name of truth and fact, by all means let it be done,—cost what it may. But let it be done with a full knowledge of what the world will lose in the doing of it ; and let it be done only in the name of truth and fact, and not in the name of a scepticism, which adopts practically, without confessing it, as its great test-principle, the old sophist dictum :—

‘ Man is the measure of all things.’

Why is the cross so dear to us, brethren ? Why has it such a hold over us ? Why is not Jesus of Nazareth only a second Socrates,—purer, wiser, nobler, it may be, but still nothing more than the founder of a petty sect, which the ever-rising

tide of new thought is destined, sooner or later, to sweep away? Why, but because the cross was crowned by the resurrection; because the weakness of the cross was glorified by the power of the resurrection? It is the resurrection, that *enthrones* the Crucified in our hearts, as our rightful King and Lord. Even when the cross is uppermost in our thoughts, and we adore Jesus specially as the Crucified,—still the resurrection is in the background of our thoughts, giving force, and weight, and the stamp of Divinity to it. And though it may be possible for an individual mind, here or there, to abandon the resurrection to the infidel, whilst he still adores the Crucified,—this is not until the faith of the resurrection has done its work in him; and its effects survive, even when their cause has been surrendered. Still it remains true, that the resurrection is an essential condition of any active propagation of the gospel. Those who have already received the gospel, may possibly be able to retain it, even whilst surrendering intellectually their belief in the resurrection. But a crucified Christ, who is not also a risen Christ, can have no ardent band of missionaries to preach Him to the world. The limits of his kingdom can never be any further extended. They can only shrink and shrink, until the world knows it no more.

Once more, then, dear brethren, choose for yourselves, which of the two alternatives you will adopt: a Christ risen, or a Jesus still dead. For myself, I can see no escape from St. Paul's argument: 'If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; 'is futile,—has no solid foundation in fact. But I can also see excellent reason to adopt his statement: 'Now,'—now, as a matter of sober, certain fact,—'is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.'

In the strength of this faith, brethren, let us '*go forward*.' Of that *death*, of which St. Paul says, 'In Adam all die,' we

all know enough, and more than enough. We find it working in ourselves, not merely as pain and disease and bodily death, but as sin, and failure, and shortcoming,—a missing the mark, a falling short of our true standard and ideal. We see it working in the world around us,—paralyzing wholesome action,—killing the life out of movements, which seemed in their origin so full of good,—dividing men from one another. Of the *death*, I say, we know enough and too much. But we have only as yet made a very partial experience,—even the best of us have only made a very partial experience,—we have yet to make a much fuller experience,—of that *life*, of which he says, ‘In Christ shall all be made alive.’

Let us ‘go forward,’ brethren ; for the faith in a risen Christ is nothing to us, unless we go forward in the strength of it. The command to ‘go forward’ must have seemed to Israel, in that hour of wild terror and peril, as impossible to obey, as the command to the paralytick of the Gospel narrative: ‘Stretch forth thine hand.’ The onward way lay right through the waves of the great sea. But, ere their feet touched the water, the way was open before them, and forward they went ; just as, in the volition to obey the command of Jesus, strength came to the palsied man, and the withered arm was restored to its original vigour. And so it will be with us. *Our* way lies through a sea of difficulties, trials, temptations,—waves of a troublesome world,—known only to God and to ourselves,—known only very partially even to ourselves. Sometimes we shrink back in dismay at the prospect of them. But as we go resolutely forward, still looking to Jesus Christ, the waves will part and divide, and the way will lie open before us to the land of freedom beyond. We know not what we can do, and dare, and bear, until we have actually tried. The promise is: ‘As thy day, thy strength shall be.’ The assurance is: ‘My grace is sufficient for thee ; for my strength is made perfect in weakness.’

Each heart knows its own bitterness ; bitterness with which,



as with its joy, no stranger intermeddleth. Is there something, that any one of us specially shrinks back from, and dreads, at this moment ; some irksome task, some hard or painful duty, some impending grief or required sacrifice ? 'Go forward.' The way will be made clear. The needful strength or patience will be yours. Take with you, as your watchword, the greeting of to-day : 'The Crucified is risen.' The cross *here* is the sure harbinger of glory hereafter. Through the cross of pain, and sorrow, and hard duty, and bitter sacrifice, lies the heavenly way. The resurrection of the crucified Christ is our warrant for believing this. The halo of the resurrection surrounds the cross, and makes it, age after age, to every sufferer in turn, the pledge of glory.

## SERMON XXV.

## CHRIST, THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE.

JOHN XI. 23.

Thy brother shall rise again.

ON Easter Day one feels as little inclined to discuss the evidence of the resurrection of Jesus, as one feels inclined on Good Friday to discuss any theory of Atonement or Propitiation. As a matter of fact, our old Christian faith in Him who says by the mouth of his servant John: 'Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death:'—this old faith of ours has brought a new life into the world: and to-day we will not dig about the roots of it, in order to trace their ramifications, but will just taste of its fruits and be thankful.

The words of my text give at once the clue to the line of thought which I propose, by the help of God, to pursue to-night. They are the words of Jesus addressed to a weeping sister: 'Thy brother shall rise again.' We all know the tale so well, that there is no need to repeat it. Nor do we need any one to interpret the story to us. Our own sad experience of life has already interpreted it to us more than once. We know—at least some of us know—what it is to lose brother,

sister, parent, child, husband, wife. We know what it is to have the home desolated by death, and in fancy to pursue the loved and lost one into the strange world beyond the grave, asking ourselves in wondering perplexity, 'Where are they?' 'What has become of them?'

Upon this subject there is a great deal of what can only be called 'romancing.' People will profess to tell us much, if not all, about the employments of that other world. It is very natural that we should wish to fill with almost any materials the vast emptiness beyond death. But it is well for us also to test the materials with which fancy would fill it, and ascertain what reason and revelation have to say to them.

Tested only by reason, it must be frankly confessed that we have not an atom of reliable intelligence as to the life beyond. When St. Paul makes his famous appeal to reason on this subject, in answer to the question: 'With what body do they come?' he is compelled to take refuge in analogies; analogies most interesting, most suggestive, certainly, but in point of logical force wholly inconclusive. He bids his questioner reflect on the passage of the seed, through its death beneath the soil, into the new and nobler life of the risen plant. As the seed is to the plant, so, he urges, is the present natural body to the future spiritual body. As the seed is transfigured, through death, into the plant; so will this natural body, he argues, be transfigured into that spiritual body.

St. Paul was evidently not encumbered with any theory of a resurrection of the gross material remains, which we consign reverently and tenderly to Nature's mighty chemistry, with the solemn words: 'Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust.' In *his* view, as we infer it from his own analogy of the seed and the plant, the body is, *not* the organized particles of matter which we deposit in the ground to see corruption there, *but* the vital force, or sum total of vital forces, by which they are organized. As the seed drops its rough protecting sheath, and dies into the plant that is to be; so, if we hold by his

analogy, will the natural body drop its coarse elements of matter, and be transfigured through death into that spiritual body which is to be. The analogy is beautiful and striking, beyond all comparison with the older pagan analogy of the transformation of the imprisoned chrysalis into the roving butterfly. But it is still only an analogy. It gives a foothold to the imagination ; it yields no solid support to the understanding. St. Paul himself gives it only for what it is worth ; a help to Christian speculation, not a foundation for Christian faith.

Nay, we must go further than this, and confess, that, tested still only by the cold light of reason, not only have we no reliable information as to the nature of the life beyond ; we have not so much as any positive certainty as to the reality of any such life at all. Some of you will have read Bishop Butler's famous argument to prove what he himself calls 'the credibility of a future life.' All that a consummate knowledge of the arguments of previous thinkers could do ; all that an intellect—subtle, clear, and strong, as ever was—could do, is done for the momentous theme there. And yet it does not profess to be a demonstration of a future life : it only claims to be a proof of its credibility.

St. Paul was well aware of this,—was well aware, that reason could neither prove nor disprove the existence of a life beyond death. The certainty of it depended entirely, in his view, upon the resurrection of Christ. Suppress the fact of his resurrection, and then immortality becomes nothing but a guess ;—not an unreasonable guess, certainly,—but still only a guess. Thus, for the assurance of the life beyond death, as well as for all information as to the nature of it, we must have recourse to Christ. If *He* has not 'the keys of the grave and of death,' none has them.

Thus we come back to our text, and the context in which it stands. The scene into which it takes us is common as the day.

‘Never morning wore  
To evening, but some heart did break.’

There are the two sorrow-stricken sisters, and the many would-be comforters, with the usual ‘vacant chaff’ of commonplace consolation, ‘well meant for grain.’ The *one* thought of the two mourners is what each expresses, so soon as each has an opportunity of speaking to Jesus: ‘Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.’ ‘*If* only He had been here,—*if* only He would have come, as soon as we sent Him word of our brother’s illness,—this would never have happened.’ Ah! who is there here who does not understand *that* ‘*If*’? ‘*If* we had only done *this* or *that*, or left *that* or *this* undone, all might have been so different. The precious life might have been spared to us.’

We must not attempt this evening to pursue the narrative through all its delicate touches, all its characteristic details, all its tender lights and shades. Our whole time and attention must be devoted to the great Master’s teaching. Often and often have those words of his, ‘I am the resurrection and the life,’ fallen, like music, upon the ears of mourners, as they stood in sad procession behind the coffin, which contained the remains of their dearest earthly treasure. What was their meaning, one wonders, to that mourning sister, to whom they were first addressed? What ought to be their meaning for *us*, whether at the moment mourners, or not?

Martha’s preparation for understanding them was this. She was a devout woman; one of a family, so superior to most in intelligence and refinement and piety, that St. John can say: ‘Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.’ All that the orthodoxy of the day could teach on the matter of the resurrection, she must have known. And, in addition to this, she must often have listened to the teaching of Jesus, and had learned to own Him as ‘the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.’

What the orthodoxy of the day could tell her as to the

future of the brother whom she had just lost, is explained by her own words here. Jesus says to her: 'Thy brother shall rise again.' To which her reply is: 'I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.' *That* was the orthodox Jewish faith of the time: a '*resurrection*,' certainly; but a '*resurrection at the last day*,' any number of ages off. Possibly she might meet him again *then*; but, in any case, not before. It was a '*perhaps*,' at the best.

Even at this day, after eighteen centuries of what we call 'Gospel-light,' we seem hardly to have got beyond Martha's point of view;—a '*resurrection at the last day*,'—far off in the distant future;—separated from us by a gap, it may be of tens, or it may be of hundreds, or it may be of thousands, or it may be of millions of years. Meanwhile,—*what?*—We cannot tell. Perhaps a sleep. Perhaps some modified form of pleasure, or some mitigated form of pain,—foretaste and precursor of the future final doom.

Now, whatever be the exact meaning of the words of Jesus, it is quite certain that they were intended to lift the sister's mind above the dreary orthodoxy of the day. *Her* future becomes *his* present: 'I know that he *shall rise* again in the resurrection at the last day.' '*I am* the resurrection and the life.' As she listened to the words, she *must* have felt, that, in some way or other, they converted her indefinite postponement into an immediate expectation.

Wise and good and learned men, from the great Augustine downwards, differ so widely as to the precise meaning that is to be attached to the words of Jesus, that one may well shrink from the task of attempting to interpret them afresh. It will not be presumptuous, however, to endeavour to indicate some of the principal thoughts, which are unmistakably contained in them. Doubts and difficulties only begin to arise, when we attempt a minute analysis and exposition of them.

'Thy brother shall rise again.' This was the first word that Jesus spoke to the sorrowing sister. '*Thy brother shall rise.*'

It may reasonably be questioned—as amongst the many interpreters of the passage it is questioned—whether Jesus was referring at the moment to the miracle that He was about to work, or *not*; whether He meant to lead the mind of Martha on to deeper thoughts about life and death, or whether He meant to encourage and strengthen that hesitating faith of hers in his power, even *then*, to restore her brother to her, which she had expressed in the words: ‘But I know, that, even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give thee.’ But at any rate, be this as it may, let us never forget that Jesus said: ‘*Thy brother shall rise.*’ To Jesus the dead Lazarus is still ‘*thy brother.*’ There was *that* in the tie of blood, which death was powerless to alter.

Many an aching heart would find comfort, if it were assured of *this*. Have we lost them for ever as *ours*, those loved ones,—lost all the claim upon their special answering love, which those old earthly names, ‘brother,’ ‘sister,’ and the like, gave us? Is the Communion of Saints one monotonous dead level of spiritual relationship? Or are the ties of earth—whether ties of blood, or ties of friendship, or ties of love—*not* abolished, *but* transfigured, in that mysterious world beyond death? On the warrant of these words of Jesus I dare to believe that they will be glorified, not destroyed; that *that*, which more than anything else makes earth bright and worth having, will be at least one of the lesser luminaries of heaven. Nay, even if we had no such words of Jesus as these, I could never bring myself to believe, that God would so mock us, as to give us these relationships and bid us be faithful to them, only to tear our hearts in pieces with grief—grief, which must necessarily be intense in proportion to our fidelity to them—when the cruel hour of death arrives to dissolve them. It is sad enough that they should be even *suspended*, through ‘ignorance of a common tongue:’—their destruction would be intolerable to us.

Here then is one thought which we will firmly grasp, in relation to that dim, unknown world, which awaits us all.

As the seed is transformed into the plant,—as the natural body is transfigured into the spiritual body,—so will the earthly relationship be glorified into its heavenly counterpart. ‘How?’—do we ask? We can only answer with St. Paul, speaking of the corresponding transfiguration of the seed: ‘God giveth it a body, as it hath pleased him; and to every seed his own body.’

Again, though it may be impossible for us to penetrate far down into the deeper meanings of our Lord’s words: ‘I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die:’—yet *one* thought at least lies on the very surface of them, and pervades the whole. They make very light of *that*, which *we* call ‘death.’ They breathe a profound contempt of physical death. What we shrink from in utter dismay, Jesus treats as a thing of small account. And his disciples certainly caught his spirit in this respect; learning to think of dying as merely a falling asleep; and speaking of their Master as having ‘abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light.’

On the other hand, no words can do justice to his horror and hatred of *that*, which *we* trifle with and think so little of, but which in his view was death indeed—*sin*. ‘I am come,’ He said, describing his mission, as the Shepherd of men, ‘that they might have life;’—true life, eternal life, the life which stands in knowing God and doing his will. Connect these words: ‘I am come that they might have life,’ with the words, ‘I am the resurrection and the life,’ and the light begins to flash upon these last. If He is the Resurrection, it is because He is the Life. If He disarms death of its terrors and gives the victory over it, it is because in Him is ‘the well of life.’ As the Resurrection, He is the Life in conflict with and conquering death. From everlasting to everlasting, He is the Life. In time only, and as the Saviour of men, He is the Resurrection.



We all know the words of the hymn :—

‘Thou of life the fountain art,  
Freely let me take of Thee ;  
Spring Thou up within my heart ;  
Rise to all eternity.’

The language of the hymn is suggested by his own words : ‘If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink :’ and, ‘Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst ; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into eternal life.’ Here is the secret of the true Christian contempt of death. It consists in being in possession of a life, which death is powerless to touch. ‘He that believeth on me, though he die, shall live.’ He shall pass through death, absolutely unharmed. Yes, ‘*He that believeth on me.*’ We drink of that eternal life, which is in Him ; we draw it into ourselves, *by faith* : by simply opening the door of our souls, that He, who is the Life, may enter. ‘Behold,’ says He, ‘I stand at the door and knock ; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him.’

We have not time to pursue any further the connection between our faith and the Life which Christ is ; through which He who is eternally the Life, is made to us the Resurrection also ; robbing death of its terrors, extracting its sting, and making it not so much *death*, as *birth* into a higher life. The more thoughtful amongst us will have innumerable questions to ask at this point—questions, which can only find a real answer and practical solution in prayer, in watching, in striving ; questions, which no human being can answer for another. The moments that are left us to-night must be occupied by one last word on the subject with which we have been engaged—the life beyond death.

In the teaching of Christ on this matter, there is, as you must already have discerned, no attempt to gratify curiosity. All justice is done, all satisfaction is given, to the deep, everlasting demands of human affection. ‘*Thy brother shall rise again.*’

All justice is also done, all satisfaction is given, to the instinctive, inextinguishable craving of the human heart for happiness. What more could we possibly ask under this head, than the Master's words, elsewhere recorded: 'Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord'? Beyond this, no concession is made to curiosity; no foothold is given to fancy. The one thought of Christ was *so* to quicken the dead souls of men, out of the fulness of his own eternal life; that, one by one, as the solemn moment comes to each, the life may conquer death, and we may find Him not the Life only, but the Resurrection also. For Himself, He was content to die, with words of simple trust upon his lips: 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.' With words of equally simple trust his first martyr Stephen was content to die: 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' With words of calm trust like these, be it ours, dear brethren, to die. The risen Christ has come back from the grave to tell us, that it is safe and well so to die; that the Father's hands can be trusted to receive his children; that their place is ready for them, all strange and new though it be, in the Home beyond.

## SERMON XXVI.

## THE SPIRITUAL BODY.

I CORINTHIANS XV. 44—49.

It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

OUR attention has been already directed to this famous chapter by the Second Lesson for this morning's service. In reading the chapter you will not fail to observe the break which occurs between the thirty-fourth and the thirty-fifth verses. The first four-and-thirty verses of the chapter are occupied with a discussion of the evidence for the resurrection of Christ, and of what is involved in the fact of that resurrection. At the thirty-fifth verse a new subject is introduced. It is introduced in the form of a question. 'Some one will say, *How* are the dead raised up? and with *what* body'—with what kind of body—'do they come?' Granted, that the dead are raised,—still we ask, with a natural and surely a pardonable curiosity, '*How*? and in *what* form?' To these questions St.

Paul proceeds to give an answer,—such answer as can be given to such questions,—in the remainder of the chapter. And it is to this answer of his that I propose to ask your attention to-night. There are those amongst us, I am sure, who, in the anguish of personal loss and bereavement, have been asking such questions with eager, anxious interest for many a month past, and who would fain find at least some sort of answer to them.

The pith of St. Paul's answer is contained in the three verses which follow the thirty-fifth. And the effect of his answer is, if not to gratify curiosity, at least to lift all our thoughts on the subject to a higher level and into a purer air. But, before reading the verses, I must take leave to make a correction in our Authorized Version, which, though slight in one way, is not so in another. The alteration which ought to be made, does not in the least degree affect the sense or meaning of the passage, but it does very considerably affect the sentiment and tone of it. It is the first two words of the thirty-sixth verse that I refer to: 'Thou fool.' I never read them, particularly in the Burial Service, without strong repugnance; and it will be a relief to many of you to know, that they are a mistranslation of the original,—a misrepresentation of St. Paul's meaning. The English reader would naturally suppose, that the word, which is here rendered 'fool,' is the same word which occurs in the solemn warning of the Sermon on the Mount: 'Whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.' Whereas it is really a totally different word, answering very nearly to our English word, 'thoughtless,' or 'unreflecting.' And it is worthy of remark, that this, and not the other, is the word used by our Lord in Luke xii. 20, in the course of the parable of the rich man, who pulled down his barns to build greater, and to whom it is said: 'This night thy soul shall be required of thee.'

We shall represent St. Paul's meaning best, if we change the form of the phrase a little, and render it thus: '*Think*'—*Reflect*—'that which *thou* sowest'—there is a strong emphasis

on '*thou*'—'is not quickened, except it die: and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him, and to every seed his own body.'

The important thing here is to seize the real point of St. Paul's analogy. Nine people out of every ten—I might say ninety-nine out of every hundred—understand him to be comparing the deposition of the seed in the soil to the interment of the dead body in the ground; and they take it, that he is affirming, that, out of that dead body, thus laid in the ground, is to spring, at a certain moment, the future spiritual body; just as, out of the seed, deposited in the soil, there springs in due season the future plant.

But it will not surely escape your notice, that the centre round which all the apostle's thoughts move in this chapter is, not the interment of the mortal remains, but *death*,—the death of the body,—the death of the seed. 'That which *thou* sowest is not quickened, except it *die*.' We must remember, also, that St. Paul—himself a Jew, but perfectly conversant with Greek literature and Greek customs—is writing to a Church, much more largely composed of Greek than of Jewish elements. Now the Jewish custom was, if possible, to *entomb*, not to *inter*, the bodies of the dead. Their graves were chambers cut in the rock. And the Greek custom was, sometimes to bury, sometimes to burn; *now* the one practice prevailing, and *now* the other. *We* are so wedded to the custom of interment, that we can hardly imagine any other. Not so St. Paul, and those to whom St. Paul wrote this letter. There was no danger, that *they* would mistake the point of his analogy. *They* would see at once, that that point was *death*,—the death of the body,—the death of the seed.

Yes, the death of the seed. When the seed is placed in the ground, it is not dead, but living. If it were dead, it would never germinate and spring up into the future plant or tree.

You can kill the seed, just as you can kill anything else that has a life of its own. You can kill it, I believe, by exposing it to extreme heat, or extreme cold, or excessive moisture, or the destructive action of certain acids. Once killed, it can never grow. But, so long as it retains its vitality, the moment it is placed in favourable circumstances, it will grow. They tell us, that grains of wheat, taken out of an Egyptian sarcophagus and planted in the ground, will grow,—thus retaining their vitality through thousands of years. The seed, then, has what one can only call a life of its own. Planted in the soil, it passes through what St. Paul calls its death. It parts with its own life in the act of giving life to the plant that is to be. It dies into life,—into the higher life of the plant.

This germination of the seed is a great mystery. We cannot explain it. No one can. We can dissect the seed into its component parts,—the protecting skin or sheath, the albumen, the embryo, with its radicle and cotyledons and plumule. We can, to a certain extent, *watch* the process, by which the sheath is thrown off and moulders away, and the root and stem and leaves are developed; but we cannot *explain* the process, or account for it. The force—the organizing force—which is at work, is an absolute mystery to us. We can only say with St. Paul: ‘That which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain: but God *giveth* it a body, as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.’

With this analogy—with this parable—St. Paul meets the inquirer, who asks: ‘How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?’ Do you ask, ‘How are the dead raised up?’—I reply, ‘By the same Divine Power, by which, in the course of nature, the plant is raised up out of the seed.’ Do you ask, ‘With what body do they come?’—I reply, ‘With a body, which is to this body of flesh and blood, what the plant is to the seed out of which it has sprung. Between the natural body and the spiritual body there is the same vital

connection that there is between the seed and the plant. As the seed dies into the plant, so the natural body dies into the spiritual body. Ask no more. You can no more infer from the natural body what the spiritual body will be, than you could, prior to actual experience, infer from the seed what will be the aspect, and size, and flower, and fruit of the future plant. Leave it all in God's hands. Leave it to his boundless power,—to the inexhaustible versatility of his infinite wisdom. He who is the author of such vast variety, such unspeakable glory, of bodies celestial and bodies terrestrial, can be trusted surely to provide for the disembodied spirit a fitting vesture,—vesture, no longer natural, but spiritual,—no longer of corruption and dishonour and weakness, but of incorruption and glory and power.

We might be well content to leave the matter so ; for a higher level of thought on such a subject we could not ask for. Let us pause for a moment or two, before we proceed any further, upon St. Paul's parable and what is involved in it.

The seed has a life of its own, as we have already said ; but a very poor, contracted, meagre life it is. Contrast with the life of the seed the life of the plant or tree, to which it is destined to give birth. How rich, how wide, how complex that life of the tree or plant is, by contrast with the life of the parent-seed. Look how it drinks in life and vigour from the soil beneath, from the dew and the rain and the sunshine above. Even so it is, St. Paul's parable tells us, with the life that now is, as contrasted with the life that is to be. Dark and narrow, barren and joyless, is the one, by contrast with the light and freedom and exuberant joy of the other. I am not disparaging this life. It is no 'howling wilderness' to those who know how to use it without abusing it, save in those dark hours which must come in God's good time, or by our own frailty, to us all. But if this life is what it is, or at least what it can be,—a thing so solemn yet so joyful ;—what must that life beyond be, to which this is

but a dark ante-chamber, full of enigmas, full of perplexities, full of trials, full of temptations ?

And so, also, as to the relation of the natural body to the spiritual body. The Psalmist says: 'I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.' Wonderful and fearful indeed is this organization of flesh and blood, this shrine of the living soul within. But with all its marvellous complexity of organ and function, it is, St. Paul teaches us, to that spiritual body that is to be, but as the body of the seed to the body of the future plant. Few indeed are the elements out of which the seed is compacted,—two or three, at the most. You have told them all, when you have mentioned the embryo or vital germ, the protecting wrapper or integument, and the albumen,—food for the growing plant in its first elemental stage,—which is sometimes present, sometimes absent. Very different is the wealth of organization, which characterizes the plant or tree, that emerges, in due course, out of this its poverty-stricken antenatal cell. Root and trunk and branch and leaf, flowers and fruit, netted veins and permeating sap; all these, and much beside these, go to make up the totality of organ and function, to which we give the name of plant and tree. Even so, St. Paul says, must we think of that body of ours, which, in the future life, is to take the place of this body which now is. 'We look,'—so he writes elsewhere,—'We look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body:' more exactly: 'Who shall transfigure the body of our humiliation so as to be conformed to the body of his glory.'

We pass on now to the words, which follow the words of our text: 'There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body':—that is, as surely as there is a natural body, so surely is there also a spiritual body:—as surely as the seed is the precursor and pledge of the plant that is to be; so surely is the natural body the precursor and the pledge of the spiritual body. And then he goes on to explain what he means by the 'natural



body.' He means, he says, such a body as that of which it is written in Gen. ii. 7: "The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.' The 'natural body' is the body of flesh and blood, animated by the living soul. It is impossible for us, in English, to keep up the connection between the word 'soul' and the word 'natural'; but in St. Paul's Greek the connection is very distinctly marked,—the word rendered 'natural' being an adjective formed from the noun 'which is rendered 'soul.' *This*, St. Paul says, was all that the first man was, or could be,—a living soul, animating an organism of flesh and blood;—as to which organism it must be said, 'Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.' For, he argues, there must needs be a regular gradation; an onward, upward progress: first the lower, then the higher; first the natural, then the spiritual; first the earthly, then the heavenly; first the living soul, then the quickening spirit; first the law of fleshly descent, then the law of the transforming life. Such I believe to be the simple key to the whole of this eloquent and most impressive passage: 'There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, "The first man Adam was made a living soul;"—the last Adam was made a quickening Spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.'

And now let me gather up the whole subject in a few concluding heads of thought and practice.

It will, doubtless, be in the minds of some of you to ask, What did St. Paul think about the resurrection of the body, in the sense in which most people conceive of it, namely, as the

resurrection in some glorified form of the actual mortal remains' which we commit to the ground with the words, 'Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust.' After what I have already said, you will be quite prepared to see, that this famous chapter passes the question by altogether. As I have shown you,—quite clearly and unmistakably, I hope,—St. Paul is thinking of DEATH, *not* of the disposal of the remains after death, when the mighty chemistry of Nature is prepared to do its work upon them. If one might venture an opinion as to what St. Paul would have said on such a subject, I should imagine it would have been something of this kind. 'I speak,' he would say, 'of the natural body in its relation to the future spiritual body; and I affirm that this natural body is the vital germ of that spiritual body, just as the seed is the vital germ of the future plant. But the natural body ceases to be the natural body, so soon as death has supervened. For, by its very name and definition, the natural body is the body animated by the living soul. When the soul has quitted the mortal frame, what remains is a body no longer. It is a mere lump of clay, upon which the chemistry of Nature forthwith proceeds to work its work. If then you think well to connect in fancy those mortal remains,—upon which the beloved likeness still remains for a little while stamped,

"Ere yet Decay's effacing fingers  
Have swept the lines where beauty lingers;"—

with the spiritual body, the organ of the emancipated soul, by all means do so. But do not impose your thought upon the more spiritual thought of others; and remember always, that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption."

I do not know whether any of *us* cling to the thought of a literal resurrection of the poor mortal frame that is actually laid in the ground. The moment we get the thought distinctly before us, we at once find ourselves setting to work to refine it

away. That poor mortal frame is, in our view, at once transfigured, glorified, spiritualized. And when we think of our own mortal bodies, we have little or no wish, I should imagine, to resume the use of them. We have found them troublesome partners of the spirit within, and we are not sorry to contemplate a final dissolution of partnership. No; what we really cling to is the personal identity, and the power of mutual recognition, which, in this life, have been so intimately bound up with the *matter* of which our bodies are composed. What we really care for is to be assured, that death has no power to destroy either the one or the other. St. Paul, sitting very loose as he does to any notion of a resurrection of buried bodies, gives us in this exquisite parable of his all the assurance that we can reasonably ask for. The natural body and the spiritual body, he tells us, are united together as seed and plant, as vital germ and ultimate product. What more can we ask? We and our loved ones shall meet again—remembering and remembered. Most true it is—

‘Death quite unfellows us,  
Sets dreadful odds betwixt the live and dead,  
And makes us part as those at Babel did  
Through sudden ignorance of a common tongue.’

But for a time only,—only for a time. The common tongue shall yet be restored; and, doubtless, in a form, which will far transcend the clumsy, misleading, and most imperfect instrument of human speech.

Forgive me, if I have touched too closely upon what must touch, more or less closely, the feelings of us all. Our last thoughts to-night shall be of a wider, less personal character than these. Few, I think, will deny that our modern theology turns for the most part upon what is commonly called the Fall of man; makes *that* its starting-point; regards the whole after-course of the Divine Providence, and more particularly the entire work of Christ, as designed with a view to obviating and

removing the disastrous effects of that Fall. Not so is it with St. Paul, nor with the other writers of the New Testament, nor with our Lord Himself. Not once, in the whole round of his teaching, does our Lord refer to *that*, which, as I say, is the centre and starting-point and key of our modern theology. The golden age of the Holy Scriptures, whether of the New Testament or of the Old, is ever in the future, not in the past. Onward, orderly progress,—a Divine discipline and education,—marked here and there by the introduction of some fresh and more potent spiritual force: *this* is the true watchword and key of that Revelation of God, of which the Bible is the written record. In St. Paul's view, as expounded in our text, the incarnation, the death, the resurrection of the Son of God constitute unspeakably the greatest epoch in the history of the human race and of the Divine dealings with it; and do, in fact, found a new era, a new commencement, a new creation. Henceforth, all may be ours, if we will:—all ours—'the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come'—all ours; because 'we are Christ's, and Christ is God's.'

This thought, as I have often explained to you, is the true reconciliation between the Bible and modern science. But of *this* I must not speak now. My last word is a word of simplest practical application. In the great world, with its law of orderly progress under the Divine education, we are to see the little world of our own lives. Look, and you will see the same law there—the same Divine education, using our very faults and failures and sins to humble us, to chastise us, to purify and elevate us. Oh, let us yield willing hearts to that Divine education; and this 'loving correction' shall yet 'make us great.'

## SERMON XXVII.

## THE RIGHTS OF CREATION.

JOB xiv. 15.

Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee : thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands.

THE pressure of other very sad thoughts prevented me from dwelling upon these words, as I should have wished to have done, on Sunday evening last, and compelled me to confine my attention to the preceding words : ‘If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come.’ But the words are so suggestive, so remarkable, so full of life and power, that I feel that I cannot forbear further comment upon them,—cannot pass away from them, without endeavouring to elicit some spark or ray, at least, of their latent heat and light.

Let us try, then, first of all, to understand the train of thought, in the midst of which these words are interposed, as a break,—at least, a momentary break. The chapter opens with the words, so familiar to us through our own burial service : ‘Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down : he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not.’ The chapter proceeds throughout in the same mournful strain. A specimen or two must suffice. Take these words, which lead up to our

text of last Sunday and to-night : ' There is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease. Though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground ; yet through the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant. But man dieth, and wasteth away : yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he ? As the waters fail from the sea, and the flood decayeth and drieth up : so man lieth down, and riseth not : till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep. O that thou wouldest hide me in the grave, that thou wouldest keep me secret, until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me ! ' Then, after the momentary outbreak of hope, which we find in our text, he reverts again to the same gloomy train of reflection : ' And surely the mountain falling cometh to nought, and the rock is removed out of his place. The waters wear the stones : thou wastest away the things which grow out of the dust of the earth ; and thou destroyest the hope of man. Thou prevailest for ever against him, and he passeth : thou changest his countenance, and sendest him away.'

Such a chapter as this does not stand by any means alone in the Old Testament. In the Psalms, in Ecclesiastes, and even in the Prophets, you will find many meditations upon life and death as gloomy, as desponding, as this. Take but one example. What does Hezekiah say in his hymn of thanksgiving for recovered health and strength ? ' The grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee : they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth.' It is such passages as these that bring out into full relief the force of St. Paul's statement, that ' our Saviour Jesus Christ hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light.'

To-night, however, we are concerned, not with the darkness, but with the light ; not with the gloomy utterances which precede and follow our text, but with the text itself, which is

all the more radiant for the surrounding gloom : 'Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee: thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands.' Nature *then*, as *now*, lent but 'ugly dreams' to the inquirer after immortality. Upon the fairest and upon the strongest of her forms, Job saw and said, there is written 'Change and decay'—nothing else. 'The waters wear the stones; the rock is removed out of his place: the mountain falling fadeth away.' Poets and geologists harp to this day upon the same melancholy string,—moralizing on the facts, or simply recording them, each from their own special point of view. For *one* hint from Nature which tells in favour of immortality, you may find a *hundred* from the same quarter which tell against it. You must look in a different direction altogether, if you would find anything to stay the hunger for immortality, which only the risen Christ can really satisfy.

The nameless writer of this wonderful and truly imperishable work wrote it, in all probability, at the period of Israel's greatest intellectual activity, the reign of Solomon;—an age of large experience of men and things,—an age intolerant, even to excess, of any arguments that would not stand the test of reason and conscience. In his search for a solid ground upon which to build some hope, however scanty, for the unknown future beyond death, he is driven at last to the simplest and most solid ground of all—the fact of *Creation*, and what is involved in creation. Of course he, along with every other inspired writer, takes creation for granted—assumes the existence of a Creator, whom he can address as 'Thou,' even as he can speak of himself as 'I.' 'Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee.' Doubtless, if questioned, he would have admitted to the fullest extent the mystery which envelopes that incomprehensible 'Thou,' as well as the mystery which envelopes that infinitely smaller thing, which each one of us calls 'I.' Every chapter of his work is pervaded with the feeling of mystery, vastness, and awe, whenever he speaks of God. But he holds firmly by his faith in a Creator, whose

creature—made in his likeness—he himself is. And his argument, if we may call it argument, is this: ‘The creature, simply as a creature, by virtue of creation, has a claim upon the Creator; a claim, which the Creator Himself will not be the last—nay, will be the first—to avow.’ ‘*Thou* shalt call, and I will answer thee.’ *Not*, ‘I will call, and Thou wilt answer me,’ but, ‘Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee: thou wilt have a *desire*,’—the word in the original is as strong as it can be,—‘Thou wilt have a *longing*’—an ardent longing—‘for the work of thine hands.’

Let us pause here, for a moment, in order to cite two other passages of Holy Scripture, in which the same hope is built upon the same thought. One is the last verse of the hundred and thirty-eighth Psalm: ‘The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me: thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever; forsake not the works of thine own hands.’ The other is 1 Peter iv. 19: ‘Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.’ And to this we may add the pleading prayer of the writer of the hundred and nineteenth Psalm (Ps. cxix. 73), which carries the whole matter to a higher level still: ‘Thy hands have made me and fashioned me: give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments.’ You will not fail to detect at once the common thought, which pervades the three passages and our text alike. They are the appeal of the creature to the faithfulness of the Creator; the pleading of the creature with the Creator, by the inalienable title of creation; *pleading*, not to be forsaken in that hour of dire distress which death, above everything, brings; *pleading*, to be taught the way of righteousness,—to be enlightened and strengthened to walk in it. And this last pleading, as I said, carries the whole matter to a higher, and the highest, level. For it is not only the plea of the created to the Creator for safety and protection even in the hour of death itself; but it is a plea for *education* in the highest conceivable sense of the word,—a plea for a moral



and intellectual uplifting, to the utmost that the created being is capable of. 'Give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments.'

It may perhaps sound bold, and even overbold, to some of us, to speak thus of creation, as giving a title to the Creator's care. The thought, however, as you will surely see, is not mine, but that of the inspired writers. Let us receive it thankfully from them,—or, rather, from the Spirit who taught them,—and embrace it heartily and joyfully. There have been times, perhaps, when we have been tempted to think of creation as investing the Creator with rights absolute and illimitable over the things and persons created. We would speak with all humility and diffidence on a subject so vast, yet so personal. If the Creator were an unfaithful, an unrighteous Creator, there would indeed be no limit to his power of dealing with, and disposing of, his creatures. But it is our happiness to know, that *might* is not *right* with Him ; that the Almighty is also the all-righteous and the all-merciful. Thus the exercise of absolute power is essentially and necessarily limited by the claims of absolute righteousness. 'Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?' Even within the limits of our own poor human experience, *we*, imperfect and evil as we are, recognize the rights of *that* (if we may say so), whether thing or person, which we, as it were, assist in some very subordinate sense to create. The sower is justly held responsible for the due care and cultivation of the growing plant. To neglect it, to allow it to wither and die for lack of proper attention, is felt to be a wrong and almost a cruelty. The father and the mother are, still more justly and still more severely, held responsible for the maintenance, education, and tenderest nurture of their children. And why? Because they are their *pro-creators*; that is, under God, their creators. Nature itself teaches us the rights of creation. And can we think for a moment, that *the* Creator is forgetful of, is insensible to, those rights? Let our Saviour's familiar argument be the

reply to the question : ' If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children ; how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him ? ' *The Creator, the Father, must* be infinitely more righteous and faithful than all subordinate and secondary creators and fathers. He will not forsake—He will have a desire to—the work of his own hands.

I see no reason to limit in any way whatever this claim of creation. Forgive me if I state the matter too trenchantly, when I say, that every created thing or person has certain rights and claims as towards the Creator. These rights and claims are determined by his or its capacities. The capacities of the rock, of the plant, of the animal, of man are all as different as they can well be. Their claims, therefore, are equally different. We may, or may not, know anything about the capacities of the dumb animal creation. But we do certainly know something about the capacities of the rational human creation. We know, that man is capable of communion with his Creator ; that he is capable of knowing and doing his Creator's will. It is upon the fact of this capacity, that our Saviour Himself founds his argument for immortality. He who is capable of holding communion with his Creator, he whose earthly life has been a walk of fellowship with God, will never be suffered by that Creator to perish in death. Living or dying, we may 'commit the keeping of our souls to Him, *in well doing*, as unto a faithful Creator.' It is the same conviction that makes the writer of this Book of Job exclaim so fervently a little further on, just in the crisis and climax of his distress : ' Oh that my words were now written ! Oh that they were printed in a book ! that they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever ! For I know that my Redeemer liveth.' ' Capable as I am of righteousness, the Creator will not leave me for ever in my unrighteousness ; capable of blessedness, he will never leave me to my misery : there *must* be, there *is*, a Redeemer. He lives : I shall see him : he will redeem *me*.'

Such thoughts as these, were these all, would be very dim and shadowy and unsatisfying. The writer of this Book of Job found them so—found them mere gleams of light in the midst of an almost pitchy darkness. Still they are a part of that *feeling* after God, which results in an ultimate *finding* of Him. They have a value, a truly inestimable value, I believe, even for *us*, who have been ‘called,’ to use St. Peter’s language, by the grace and gospel of God ‘out of darkness into his marvellous light.’ The conviction, which dictated the words of our text, has been justified a thousand-fold by the Gospel of Christ, thereby making the words themselves a thousand-fold more precious to us. We may take them on our own lips, and say with vastly more meaning than the writer could possibly have put into them: ‘Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee: thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands.’

The difference, however, between us and him, and between our standing-ground and his, is rather one of force of conviction, than of definiteness of statement. The cross and the open grave of our Lord Jesus Christ justify the most entire confidence in Him, whom we *now* know, as not only Creator, but also Father. It is not for us to fall back into the gloomy strain, in which it was natural and indeed inevitable that the writer of the book of Job should indulge. But when it comes to be a question of picturing out this hope of immortality,—of giving form and colour to it,—we find ourselves still just where the writer of our text was. We can only say, as St. Paul says, with the old prophet of Israel: ‘Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.’

It is very necessary to say this, because, if some religious writers were to be believed, the occupations and enjoyments of heaven are almost as well known in advance, as the duties and trials of earth are by sad experience. According to *them*, the symbolism and imagery of the Revelation of St. John may be safely used as a guide to our imaginations in picturing the

bliss that awaits the righteous after death ;—a mistake, surely, almost as strange and grotesque as that of *those* who would argue from the same symbolism and imagery to show what the worship of the Church on earth ought to be. All such flights of argument or fancy are far beside the mark of St. John's intention. And well it is for us, that all those pictures of heaven, in which harps and crowns occupy so large a space, are but fancy pictures,—pictures painted by a fancy that is purely human, and not particularly elevated either. No such heaven as this had our Saviour and his apostles in their view, when they indicated so much in a few inspiring words like these : 'Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord : ' 'Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness : ' 'An inheritance, incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.'

The utmost that we can do in this direction is to aid our thoughts with a few analogies, the result of which must be to make us more than ever distrustful of speculation, and more than ever disposed to trust the future to God in a truly boundless hope. For example, there is the old world-famous analogy of the crawling caterpillar, which dies into the chrysalis, and rises to a new life in the butterfly. The caterpillar bound fast to its single leaf or its solitary tree,—what could it surmise as to the life of the winged creature, fluttering from field to field, from flower to flower? Then again there is St. Paul's analogy of the seed, which dies underground into the new plant. Who, without actual experience of the fact, would suspect, that out of that single grain of living seed there would issue the complex organism and life of the plant or shrub or tree? It is true St. Paul applies this analogy by way of answer to the special question, 'With what body do the dead come?' But the analogy is equally helpful to our thoughts, when we would speculate upon the relation of the future life, as a whole, to this poor present life. What the full-grown oak is to the acorn,—such, or something like that, is the future blessedness of the saints to their earthly existence of trial and temptation ; the one, out of

all proportion to the other ; the one, absolutely insurmisable from the other. Or, once more, what the unborn babe is to the mature man or woman ; *that*, separated by so wide an interval, is the struggling member of the Church militant to the glorified member of the Church triumphant. As easily might the babe unborn predict its own future, as *we* predict the nature of that unknown life, that lies beyond the mysterious margin of death. We can only say with St. John : ' It doth not yet appear what we shall be.'

' And such I deem  
This world will seem,  
When we waken from life's mysterious dream ;  
And burst the shell  
Where our spirits dwell  
In their wondrous ante-natal cell.'

We are in the hands, then, of a Creator, a Father, who knows what He would do with us, knows what we are capable of, knows what He created us for ; and who assuredly will not leave us, until He hath done that which He hath spoken to us of. Is this a truth which is calculated to encourage us in an indolent, self-satisfied view of life ; or in a careless walk before Him, whose purposes for us are what His are ? Most certainly not. On the contrary, the moment this truth comes home to us, as no longer a mere speculation, a possibility, a peradventure, but a hard, almost palpable, fact ; *that* moment must self-satisfaction give place to self-reproach, and indolence and carelessness to resolute and earnest striving. How was it with Job, when the feeling after God became an actual finding ? No words could then express his self-abasement, his sense of unworthiness and unprofitableness. ' I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear : but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.'

Job's confidence in God, you remember, was justified to the uttermost. He had not spoken a word too much, when he had said : ' Thou shalt call ; thou wilt have a desire to the work of thy hands.' But the moment all that he had said and

thought about God flashed upon him as a reality, it subdued him at once ; it humbled him into the dust. 'Behold, I am vile ; what shall I answer thee ? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth.' It was not that he had been speaking or thinking insincerely. He was no hypocrite, whatever his friends might say. But as soon as the truths, which he had been groping after in the darkness and feebly proclaiming, became as real to him as his own existence, they overpowered him by their majesty and their unspeakable importance. They silenced and they humbled him.

The very same thing happens still, whenever we come thoroughly to realize, what we have often, and long, and quite sincerely professed. Such a simple truth as this of creation, for example, and what is involved in it,—the Creator's claim upon *us* his creatures for obedience and self-surrender, *our* claim upon Him for guidance and moral uplifting,—how reasonable it sounds, how undeniable ! But grasp it, realize it ; and how tremendous it is ! What a severe yet wholesome pressure it puts upon us in the direction of righteousness ! For, unquestionably, whatever else may be his will for us, in the way of happiness and so forth, *righteousness* is the Creator's will for us his human creatures. At our peril, then, do we choose unrighteousness for ourselves ; or make no choice whatever in the matter. By the sternest penalties,—out of very love,—in the discharge (forgive the word) of his *duty* as Creator,—He will compel us to choose, not death, but life ; not evil, but good ; not sin, but righteousness. Let us be warned in time, and choose at once for ourselves, what He from all eternity has chosen for us.

We need add no more. Let this be our choice for ourselves, and all *must* be well. *Then*,—in that dark hour, when the mortal senses are being slowly paralyzed by death, and the soul is on the brink of its new birth into the life beyond,—there will be a Love ready to welcome us, even as a father's and a mother's love welcomed us into this life. The way will be smoothed for us through the dark vale. For the Creator *will have a desire to the work of his hands.*

## SERMON XXVIII.

## ELIJAH'S LEGACY.

2 KINGS ii. 15.

The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha.

THERE is an old saying of a great Greek poet, that it is impossible to pronounce upon the happiness of a man's life, until it has reached its termination, and can be viewed and judged as a whole. The reverses of life (he saw) are often so great, its complications so intricate and sometimes so tragic, that it is impossible to augur at any given moment, either from the saddest or from the happiest circumstances, what the future may bring forth, and whether the sun will set at last in serenest radiance, or amidst clouds and gloom and tempest.

The Greek poet was thinking of the *happiness* of life. We may transfer his thought from the sphere of circumstances and of outward prosperity or adversity, to that of conduct and of character; and we may seek illustrations of it no longer in the materials of fable and fiction, which Greek Tragedy delighted to mould, but in the sober accessible pages of Sacred History. Who can suppress something more than a *sigh*,—a positive pang of utter disappointment,—as he peruses the narrative of Solomon's declension, or the legacy of revenge which David on his death-bed bequeathed to his son? David's shameful fall is another

thing altogether. He *rose* from his fall again ; rose, a sadder, wiser, better man. He carried the scar of it to his grave ; in bitter consequences, in still more bitter self-reproach. We can understand this. Horrible as was the crime, it was so terribly scourged by Divine justice, and the repentance for it was so deep and true, that our moral sense is left without any feeling of outrage and rebellion. The righteousness of God is fully asserted ; and, along with this, the possibility of man's moral recovery even from the deadliest sin. But the cold-blooded policy, so unlike the magnanimity of David's earlier days, which dictated those last parting charges to Solomon with reference to Joab and Shimei ; that practical falsification of pledges ; that breach of his word of honour ; *this* betrays a deterioration of character, a loss of moral dignity and worth, far more painful to contemplate, than even an act, however deeply dyed in guilt, hastily committed, terribly punished, bitterly repented of. Over the last we pause in sorrowful reflection, remembering the Apostle's words, 'Considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.' Over the first we hang in utter bewilderment. It opens up before us possibilities in human nature,—possibilities of moral decay, upon which we hardly dare to gaze.

No wonder, then, that even Paul felt compelled to write,—  
'Lest by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.' No wonder that our own Keble wrote those sorrowful lines :—

'The grey-haired saint may fail at last ;  
The surest guide a wanderer prove ;  
Death only binds us fast  
To the bright shore of love.'

And for ourselves, what shall we say ? Better a thousand times *death*, than that we should live to descend to a lower moral level, to breathe an air less pure than we have once risen to, once inhaled. If to the true soldier there is not a moment's



question between death and dishonour, how much more ought it to be so with the soldier of Christ! Nay, we may go further, and join heartily in the daily prayer of the saintly Brainerd, 'That we may not outlive our usefulness:' not merely not live to dishonour ourselves, but not outlive our highest usefulness.

This is a sombre background, on which to paint the picture which is in my mind for our study this evening—a picture full of brightness and colour. But this sombre background will have served its purpose, if it leads us to reflect very seriously upon the actual plan and drift and tendency of our own lives at the present moment by comparison with the past, with a sincere desire to ascertain, whether they are sinking to a lower, or rising to a higher moral level; and, if the former, *why* it is so, and what is the spiritual remedy for a state of things so fraught with peril to our souls. And oh! may the Divine Teacher—the Light of every conscience, the Discerner of the thoughts and intents of every heart—be with us (as indeed He is ever with us) in this heart-searching work,—revealing, reproof, correcting, restoring, healing.

As a general rule, life is full of ragged edges, incompletenesses, imperfections. Things will not round themselves off, just *as* we should like, and just *when* we should like. It is only now and then, that we can *see*, and then only in part,

'That all, as in some piece of art,  
Is toil, co-operant to an end.'

The Bible—that true mirror of human life and human nature—is full of illustrations of this. Only here and there do we find the ideal completeness, for which we long, but which in this life we so rarely meet with. We may count upon our fingers—almost upon the fingers of one hand, I think—the Scripture characters and lives, which seem to possess this ideal completeness. In the Old Testament I can only recall two, whose lives move in one piece, as it were, from first to last,—the closing

scene of all throwing a halo of glory round the whole. You will know at once whom I mean. Whom could I mean but the two who were counted worthy to converse with Jesus on the mountain of the transfiguration,—Moses, the representative of the Older Dispensation on the side of Law, and Elijah, its representative on the side of the Prophets ;—*Moses*, of whom it is written, ‘So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the mount according to the word of the Lord ; and he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-Peor ; but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day ;’—and *Elijah*, of whom it is written, ‘And it came to pass, as they still went on and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder ; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.’

It is of the second of the two that I would speak to you awhile to-night. Our text is taken from one of the Lessons for Thursday last—Ascension Day. It is a passage which it is impossible to read without profound emotion. How it has taken hold of the heart of Christendom, witness the world-famous allegory which describes thus the end of the faithful martyred pilgrim !—

‘They therefore brought him out to do with him according to their law : and first they scourged him, then they buffeted him, then they lanced his flesh with knives ; after that they stoned him with stones ; then pricked him with their swords ; and last of all they burned him to ashes at the stake. Thus came Faithful to his end.

‘Now I saw that there stood behind the multitude a chariot and a couple of horses waiting for Faithful, who, as soon as his adversaries had dispatched him, was taken up into it, and straightway was carried up through the clouds, with sound of trumpet, the nearest way to the Celestial Gate.’

In these critical days people ask, and *will* ask, ‘And *was* it so ? *Did* there, indeed, appear that chariot of fire, with its horses of fire ? And *was* Elijah carried up by a whirlwind into

heaven?' To which questions we can only make direct reply thus: 'We cannot *prove* it; we cannot, at this distance of time, demonstrate to you that so it was; we cannot cross-question Elisha, or those "fifty men of the sons of the prophets who stood to view afar off." If ye will receive it, receive it; and if not, be it so.'

But, indirectly, we can make reply thus: 'Study the narrative. Learn to appreciate its everlasting human and Divine significance. The form will then become dear to you for the sake of the meaning,—the sign for the sake of that which is signified by it. Or, if you feel constrained to part with the form and the sign, all the more earnestly and reverently will you cling to the thing signified—the inner meaning of the outward form.'

The narrative, then, tells us, how the great Elijah, conscious that his work is done and his end near, would fain be alone with God in those last hours, but cannot persuade his favourite pupil and dearest friend Elisha to leave his side. Ever and again, the answer to his 'Tarry here, I pray thee; for the Lord hath sent *me* to Bethel, to Jericho, to Jordan—' is, 'As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee.' The 'sons of the prophets' at Bethel and at Jericho—(that is to say, the students in those schools of history, which, being schools of history, were *therefore* schools of prophecy, and of which Samuel appears to have been the founder; schools, in which Elijah apparently took the deepest interest)—either through some vague presentiment, or expressing the popular belief that the days of the great prophet were numbered, come forward to warn Elisha how near his master's end is. Elisha silences them, half in sorrow, half in anger: sorrow, for his own approaching loss,—anger, to hear that which was so sacred and precious to himself lightly spoken of. He will cling to his master to the last, come what may. At length the two stand together by the side of the Jordan. Elijah smites the waters with his mantle, and they part and

make room for the two friends to pass over on dry ground. Then, in that last hour, Elijah says to Elisha, 'Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee;' and Elisha, worthy of the occasion, replies, 'I pray thee, let a double portion'—'two-thirds' some render it—'of thy spirit be upon me.' And the answer is, 'Thou hast asked a hard thing: nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so.' Then, on a sudden, as they still go on and talk, there is the chariot of fire and the horses of fire; and in an instant they are parted asunder, and Elijah is gone up by a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha *saw* it. He gazed without flinching upon the strange and marvellous vision, and cried after the departing friend, 'My father, my father; the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof.' His friend is gone, and he is left alone with his grief. He takes up the mantle of Elijah, which had fallen from him, and, with it in his hand, he stands once more by the bank of the Jordan. Like Elijah, he smites the waters with it, asking, doubtfully,—as on the first essay of a new life and strength,—'Where is the Eternal, the God of Elijah?' and the waters part again, and he passes over. Even to the sons of the prophets, who are 'to view' at Jericho, it is evident that 'The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha.'

Such is a short summary of this exquisite passage. One spoils it, I am afraid, by epitomizing it. But, at the same time, the slight transformation of the language, upon which I have ventured, may help to break the dangerous spell of habit, and make the inner meaning of the words more palpable to us.

I know how one used to read the narrative oneself as a child, and what a new light it was upon it, when first one discovered, that the words, 'The chariot of Israel,' had no reference to the 'chariot of fire' in which Elijah was being borne up into heaven, but were Elisha's own description of what his friend Elijah had been to his country and to his people,—

'The chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof:' Israel's artillery and cavalry, as it were,—to modernize the phrase. Possibly this view of the passage may be as new to some of you, as it once was to myself. Couple the words with those which precede them, and you get Elisha's view of Elijah's life and character, viewed as a whole: 'My father, my father; the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof.' When it came to be Elisha's turn to die, and he lay on his sick bed, with kings for his attendants and mourners, his own life and work were summed up, we are told, in the very same words: 'Now Elisha was fallen sick of his sickness whereof he died. And Joash, the king of Israel, came down unto him, and wept over his face, and said, "O my father, my father; the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof." So true it was: 'The spirit of Elijah doth rest upon Elisha.'

Seldom, if ever, was there a more terse and vigorous epitaph composed to commemorate a departed friend,—terse and vigorous, because wrung from the heart on the spur of the moment: certainly there never was one, which has lasted so long. In those few words we have the two sides of Elijah's character—the intense tenderness and sympathy, which had so won Elisha's heart, that it was as though to lose him were to lose a *father*: '*My father, my father*:' and, along with this, the rugged, indomitable strength of character and will, which had swept obstacle after obstacle away: '*The chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof*.'

We must pass by many points of lesser interest, in order to concentrate our attention, before we conclude, upon the special lesson suggested by our text. The pupil was worthy of the master,—the son, of the father,—who, in that last moment, could meet the invitation, 'Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee,' with the request, 'I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit'—or, in its more modest form, 'let two-thirds of thy spirit'—'rest upon me.' For the true legacy of the higher to the lower—of the dying master and

father to the surviving pupil and son—must ever be a *spirit*. The *true* legacy, I say: for the temptation ever is, on the one side to *leave*, and on the other to *welcome*, some other legacy; some false legacy, which cramps and fetters,—not inspires:—the legacy, for example, of some system of opinions, or of some code of rules of action—a philosophy, or a theology, or a morality, not a SPIRIT. Elisha knew what he wanted; and well it was for him, that he did. And Elijah knew, that this was just what the pupil wanted, and the master would delight to give—but, for that very reason, a '*hard* thing.' He would test him. Could he meet with unflinching gaze, without terror or dismay, the apparition that was momentarily to be expected? If he could, then all would be well. The master's spirit would certainly be his—*his*, at least, in its indomitable strength, if not in its winning tenderness and attractive grace. Time—conversance with human sorrow, and suffering, and sin—would bring the second; if the first were already there.

And so it was. The outward form of Elisha's life was very different from that of Elijah's. He was the trusted counsellor and confidant of kings; where Elijah had been their fiery, fearless opponent. 'Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?'—such was Ahab's greeting to Elijah in the vineyard of the murdered Naboth. And the answer came back, 'I *have* found thee, because thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the Lord.' The outward form of Elisha's life, I repeat, was very different from that of Elijah's; but the spirit of the two lives was the same. With each, it was one unswerving testimony to the living God, and the righteousness of his government of men. 'As the Lord God liveth, before whom I stand:—'in that pregnant formula the spirit of Elijah's life uttered itself; and that of Elisha's was the same.

At the risk of incurring a moment's misconstruction, and in order to give force and weight to the thought of our text, I would point out to you, that our Lord Jesus Christ Himself came into the world, *to live a life, and to bequeath a spirit*. It

is often advantageous to come to the higher and greater from the lower and less. That request of Elisha,—that answer of Elijah,—that comment of the ignorant and unspiritual sons of the prophets, with whom to be able to do wonderful works like Elijah was the one decisive proof that the scholar had inherited the master's spirit;—all this may furnish us with a little clue to understand and realize—better, perhaps, than we have yet done—in a simple, homely, practical way, the teaching of Jesus as to his own departure and the coming of the Spirit;—that Spirit, whom the Father would 'send in his name,'—that is, to bring his followers into living fellowship with Himself. As long as Elijah was with Elisha, Elisha would not dream of asking for his spirit. His instruction, his advice, his mode of working and acting fully satisfied the scholar's present need. Let these be withdrawn from him,—let the master's death come between him and them;—and then he would be forced to cry for the spirit of his master, to make his own life, not a pedantic imitation, but a living copy of *his*. And so for those first disciples of Jesus; and so also for ourselves. What we want is the Spirit of our Master, in order that we may live our lives, as He would have us live them,—amid all the variety of other circumstances, in fundamental harmony with Him. And this, too, is a 'hard thing'—hard, *not* for Him to grant; for indeed He *does* grant it, and *is* granting it; but hard for us to do. If we have in any degree learned to cry, in action and in suffering, 'Father, thy will be done;'—this is due to the Spirit of Jesus working in us. For St. Paul says, 'Because ye *are* sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, whereby we cry, "Abba, Father."'

We may descend from this highest region of all to what is purely human again. Rightly understood, what *is* the true ambition of every son of man? What *ought* to be our own ambition? May we not express it in the same form of words: *To live a life, and to bequeath a spirit*—to live a worthy life, and to bequeath a recollection, a memory of us, which shall

be a spiritual influence, mighty for good. Who amongst us to-night can estimate the extent, to which he is indebted to such spiritual influences for the good, be it little or much, which is to be found in him. This legacy of the past to us ought to be handed on with interest to the future. Let the fathers and mothers amongst us this evening reflect, what an unspeakable difference it will make to their children, of what sort the spiritual legacy, which they bequeath to them, shall be. The memory of a saintly or God-fearing parent has often been the turning-point for good in the career of a child. But in order to bequeath the regenerating spirit, they must first live the life which creates it. Christ Himself could not have sent forth the Spirit, had He not lived as He lived, and died as He died. And in no other way,—on no other plan,—can we be humble followers and imitators of Him.

I repeat, it should be the ambition, it should be the earnest effort of us all, to transmit, to bequeath a spirit, which shall work for good, as Elijah's did, when we are gone. And in order to do this, we must live such lives as shall be capable of creating such a spirit; a spirit, which may rest on others, and move them on to noble ends. Now the life, which alone is capable of creating and transmitting such a spirit, will, amidst great diversity and variety of form, be always characterized by two things. It will be lived on fixed *principles*, in adherence to a settled *law*; and *that* law, the Will of God, the Example of Christ. And, in addition to this—or, if you like to put it so, as a necessary part and consequence of this—it will be marked by upward striving and aspiring, diligent endeavour, earnest effort. Oh! dear friends, let us try, *all of us*, yet once again, however weary of trying we may be, so to live our lives now, that,—when our bodies are turned to dust, and we have become just a memory, and no more (so far as earth is concerned), in a few hearts,—*that* memory may yet be a power for good, a seed of life, a joy and a blessing to all whom it visits,—healing, refreshing, comforting.



## SERMON XXIX.

## BABEL.

GENESIS xi. 9.

Therefore is the name of it called Babel.

THE curious passage from which I have taken these words runs, as a whole, *thus*: ‘And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there. And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech. So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the

earth : and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.'

This curious and suggestive passage, — for curious and suggestive in the highest degree it is, — is appointed to be read as one of the Lessons of this Whitsun season. It is associated, at the morning service of the Monday in Whitsun-week, with a passage from St. Paul's Epistle, the ruling thought of which is expressed thus : 'For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body : so also is Christ. For by one spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free ; and have been all made to drink into one spirit.'

It may have been accident, it may have been a touch of truly Divine insight and inspiration, that produced this happy association of contrasted passages. As to *this*, more by and by. Our first thoughts to-night must be given to our text and its context ; and we must work our way slowly up, until we reach that higher point of view which the association of the two passages suggests.

Let us look steadily at these first nine verses of the eleventh chapter of the Book of Genesis, which I have just read to you. You will quickly see, that they stand quite alone, — an isolated fragment, having no point of connection either with the chapter which precedes, or with the verses which follow them. The last words of the preceding chapter are as follows : 'These are the sons of Shem, after their families, after their tongues, in their lands, after their nations. These are the families of the sons of Noah, after their generations, in their nations : and by these were the nations divided in the earth after the flood.' These words, you see, take for granted that confusion of tongues and that dispersion of nations, the origin of which our text and its context proceed to describe. And the first words which follow our passage take up again the subject of the preceding chapter : 'These are the generations of Shem.' Our

passage, I repeat, is evidently an isolated fragment,—a huge boulder of primitive rock, transported *whence* we know not, deposited by seeming accident upon the spot which it happens to occupy.

A first cursory inspection of the passage yields at once this result. A closer examination opens our eyes to the curious structure and composition of this strange isolated fragment of the sacred narrative. We mark how anthropomorphic it is in its thought and language. 'The Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded.' 'Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.' In this very anthropomorphism we detect the primitive character of the fragment under our consideration. Even so, in the infancy of human thought, man does, and must, think and speak about God.

I am well aware that historical criticism, fastening upon the name 'Lord,'—that is, Jehovah,—which occurs four times in the course of these nine verses, would assign the passage to the pen of a writer, whom it names the Jehovist, and whose work belongs, in its estimation, to a time late on in what may be called the literary history of the first five books of the Canon of the Old Testament. This may, or may not, be true: I pass no judgment upon it. But at any rate it makes no difference to such results as we have already reached. The writer, whose existence we are supposing, may very well have incorporated into his work such a fragment of primitive tradition as this,—adopting the substance, modifying the expression.

Now this fragment of primitive tradition professes, as you see, to mount back to a time, when 'the whole earth was of one language and of one speech.' But was there ever such a time? One of the most interesting fields of modern scientific research is that which deals with this very question. It has been proved almost to demonstration, that all existing known languages can be reduced to certain great families or groups, having a

common origin, being descendants of a common parent tongue. Of such parent languages it seems that we need not assume the existence of more than three,—commonly known as the Turanian, the Semitic, and the Aryan. It is still an open question, whether or no these three can be reduced to one. Upon this question, the great master of the subject, Professor Max Müller, writes thus: ‘We have examined all possible forms which language can assume, and we have now to ask, Can we reconcile with these three distinct forms—the radical, the terminational, and the inflectional—the admission of one common origin of human speech? I answer decidedly, Yes.’ And to these words we may add the following from the pen of the great geologist, Sir Charles Lyell: ‘If the philologist is asked, whether, in the beginning of things, there was one, or five, or a greater number of languages, he may answer that, before he can reply to such a question, it must be decided whether the origin of man was single, or whether there were many primordial races. But he may also observe, that if mankind began their career in a rude state of society, their whole vocabulary would be limited to a few words, and that if they then separated into several isolated communities, each of these would soon acquire an entirely distinct language, some roots being lost and others corrupted and transformed beyond the possibility of subsequent identification, so that it might be hopeless to expect to trace back the living and dead languages to one starting-point, even if that point were of much more modern date than we have now good reason to suppose.’

We must not attempt to read the results of modern science into the pages of our Bibles, or to square the language of the Bible to the results of modern science. But we shall be doing no violence either to the language of the Bible or to the results of science, if we trace in this curious fragment of the Bible story the memory of a period,—I do not say when human language had not yet split up into its three great parent stocks,

*but*, when one of those three parent stocks, the Semitic, had not yet split up into its numerous later subdivisions, such as Hebrew, Syriac, Arabic. The great writer already quoted, Professor Max Müller, does indeed say, that 'that period transcends the recollection of every one of the Semitic races, in the same way as neither Hindoos, Greeks, nor Romans have any recollection of the time when they spoke a common language, and worshipped their Father in heaven by a name that was as yet neither Sanskrit, nor Greek, nor Latin.' But with all deference to an authority so high, I cannot help thinking, that the recollection of that period, after long lingering as a tradition in the memory of one of those Semitic races,—so well known to us as the children of Israel,—came to be at last imbedded, as an imperishable fragment, in that page of the sacred narrative which we are now considering.

But there is more than this. We have in the same curious and suggestive fragment the memory of the earliest effort, or of one of the earliest efforts, to construct such a great world-empire as the ambition of kings and emperors delights to create. The locality of this embryo-empire is the locality of more than one subsequent full-grown empire: 'a plain in the land of Shinar.' The 'land of Shinar' is the land of the two rivers,—those two giant rivers, the Tigris and the Euphrates, which water the vast plain, upon or adjacent to which stood Nineveh and Babylon, and older cities than these, such as Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, and (as some think) that Ur of the Chaldees, from which Abraham came. Here, in this land of Shinar, for many a long age after those earliest builders, there were those who said, 'Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly:' 'Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.'

How strong the building of those earliest builders and their successors was, miles upon miles of stately ruins are there to

testify even to this day. Mr. Layard tells us, that at Birs Nimrod, supposed to be part of the ruins of the ancient Babylon, 'the cement'—that is, the 'slime,' or 'bitumen,' of our text—'by which the bricks were united, is of so tenacious a quality, that it is almost impossible to detach one from the other.' Now we must interpret the narrative by the light of the known facts of human nature. *This*, we may depend upon it, was no *republic* of builders; no co-operative association of bricklayers and bricklayers' labourers, bent on immortalizing themselves by the work of their own hands. This early effort at centralization, with a huge metropolis as its focus, sprang, we may be quite sure, from the brain of some one ambitious potentate, and was baptized, from the very first, in the blood and sweat and misery of toiling millions. That 'Go to, let us make brick, let us build us a city, let us make us a name,' is not the language of voluntary association; but is the stately style, which emperors affect. By this time we know only too well, what it means;—the cynical indifference to human suffering, the wastefulness of human life, the utter selfishness, the cruelty, the hardness of heart, masked under gilded forms. We know, I say, only too well. Take but one—the most recent, and, comparatively speaking, a moderate—specimen. During the last few weeks we have been waiting in anxious suspense to see, whether or no the master of countless legions would find some flimsy pretext for letting loose his soldiers upon crushed and unoffending France. Have you meanwhile pictured to yourself all, or but a fraction of, that, which was involved in a decision, which seemed—unless we are utterly misinformed—to turn only on the cast of a die: the anguish, the heartache, the tears, the woe incalculable and irremediable?

The characteristic of all world-empires—that which makes them world-empires—is that they lean upon *might*, and not upon *right*. Just in so far as they do this, they are *world-empires*. And, doing this, they are a defiance to the eternal righteousness of God. And, being *this*, they are doomed to decay.

‘One by one  
They tower, and they are gone.’

The curious anthropomorphic language of our text is but the child's way of expressing what the Psalmist, in his own grand, but still quite anthropomorphic, way expresses thus: ‘He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath: and vex them in his sore displeasure. Yet have I set *my* king upon my holy hill of Zion.’ In such world-empires there is no true cohesion. The force which unites is purely external. The moment its pressure relaxes, the thing breaks up.

Further than this I do not see my way to press the meaning of the narrative. If, for example, we lean upon the phrase of the second verse,—‘As they journeyed from the East,’—as symptomatic of the general set and tide of nations *westwards*; we are met at once by the assurance of Hebrew scholars, that the phrase in the original may just as well mean ‘*eastwards*,’ as ‘*from the east*.’ If, again, we rest upon the explanation of the word Babel, as meaning ‘confusion,’ we are met again by the assurance, that, though this derivation is grammatically correct, yet it is at least not impossible, that the name was originally formed from a combination of two words, which would mean ‘Court of Bel,’ or ‘House of God.’ If this were so, it might be reasonably argued, that the name *Babel* was not derived from the confusion of tongues, but that the story of the confusion of tongues grew out of a misunderstanding of the name. The narrative, then, when we had dissolved out all its soluble ingredients, would leave us with this solid residuum of demonstrable fact: a *reminiscence* of that prehistoric period, when the various Semitic languages had not yet disengaged themselves from their one parent stock; and an *illustration* of that law of decay and disintegration, to which all empires are subject, which lean upon might and not upon right, and whose motto is: ‘Let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may

reach unto heaven ;'—or, in the language of the greatest of the prophets of Israel : ' I will ascend into heaven ; I will exalt my throne above the stars of God : I will ascend above the heights of the clouds ; I will be like the Most High.' To all which boastfulness, whensoever, wheresoever, and by whomsoever uttered or thought, the everlasting answer is, 'Thou shalt be brought down to hell : thy pomp shall be brought down to the grave : the worm shall be spread under thee, and the worms shall cover thee.'

In other words, *man*, seeking to make himself as God, can offer no rest, no centre of unity, no position of stable equilibrium, to his fellow-men. He may be armed with irresistible might. He may be statesman and general, as well as king or emperor. By his very success he sows the seeds of decay. Collapse and disintegration overtake his work, even in the very hour of its seeming triumph. I remember visiting the tomb of the First Napoleon in Paris on one of the last days of the June of 1870. You know it, or you have heard about it. It struck me irresistibly, with all its accompaniments, as the symbol of just such a world-empire, as I have been speaking about to-night. Within three months from that day, that empire—like its predecessor—had collapsed in blood and disaster.

*Not* he, who, being man, would make himself as God ; *but* He, who being God, makes Himself man ; is the true centre of rest and union for a suffering and divided Humanity. This is the true reason, why we pass to-morrow straight from the story of Babel to the thought of Him, who by one Spirit baptizes us all into one body, and makes us all drink into one spirit, 'whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free ;'—one Body, animated by one Spirit, in the membership of which the deepest national distinctions, and the deepest social distinctions—so far as they are hostile and antagonistic and unbrotherly—fade out and are effaced. As we kneel at the Lord's Table, and take the bread and the wine in his Name, we set to our seal, that so it is ;—that He is the true Head



and King of men ; that only in Him can we find rest to our own souls,—union, as of members of the same family, with our fellow-men.

Let us try, in conclusion, to grasp this thought firmly, and to bring it home with all seriousness to heart and conscience. For these things must never be allowed to evaporate in mere sentiment and feeling ; no, nor yet to penetrate only as far as the intellect, in phrases however pointed or language however incisive, in which we would mark the distinction between the Man-God and the God-Man. What we have been observing on a great scale in the rise and fall of empires, resolves itself practically for each one of us—young and old, learned and unlearned, gentle and simple alike—into a question as to the selection of the centre, to which we will refer ourselves, our lives, our actions. Yes, selection of the centre, to which, consciously or unconsciously, we will refer ourselves and all that belongs to us. And this selection is really limited to two, —two alternative centres—of which one is *self*, and the other is *God*. We may live to self, or we may live to God. We may live to follow the devices and desires of our own hearts ; or we may live to do the will of God.

All this is, in theory, quite clear and certain ; and I have explained it so often, that it will be in danger of sounding as a tale thrice told in your ears. The rule of holy living is clear enough ; the application of it in daily practice is the real difficulty. And here it is little indeed, that one can do for another. It is a matter of individual patient watching and striving. The special comfort suggested to our minds by what we commemorate to-day is *this* : That God does not leave us to ourselves ; that his Spirit is with us, is seeking our spirits, to quicken them out of their death of self and sin into life to righteousness and Himself. Calmly and earnestly to welcome his Spirit, in order that his humbling, healing, quickening work may go on freely within us,—*this*, in the light of to-day's commemoration, we take to be our special task.

St. Paul writes: 'We glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.' Patience, he seems to say, is the key of the position; the patience that can wait quietly and not be in a hurry. The fruit of patience is experience—experience of God's manner of dealing with us; and the result of that experience is hope. The more we know of, the better we understand, God's method of treating us and educating us, the more full of hope we shall be. We shall see how, in the design of God, all things work together for good to us.

And, therefore, dear brethren, whatever difficulties and trials may beset our path, we, for our part, will say with the Psalmist: 'Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord;'—or, with the prophet: 'In quietness and confidence shall be your strength.'

## SERMON XXX.

### THE NECESSITY OF DOGMA.

I CORINTHIANS xiii. 11, 12.

When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child : but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly ; but then face to face : now I know in part ; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

I WAS saying, on Sunday evening last, that we should not recover Christian charity by renouncing all definiteness of Christian belief, and that the development of Christian doctrine might be pure gain to us without any countervailing loss, if we did but remember St. Paul's words : ' Now we see through a glass, darkly,' that is, imperfectly,—' in part,' and only in part.

On this Sunday, of all the Sundays of the year, we are reminded of the value and importance of a definite Christian belief. And I propose this evening, God helping me, to draw your attention to *this*,—this need of a definite belief ; and also to the limitations and conditions, by which such a belief is necessarily accompanied. The subject is one of great importance ; but its difficulty is at least equal to its importance.

That there is in many quarters a growing dislike of any definite or distinctive expression of Christian truth, seems to me to be an unquestionable fact. The publication of that remarkable work, ' Literature and Dogma,' in which so much

that is true and excellent is blended with so much that is false and mischievous ; and the acceptance which that work has met with in the course of the twelve months or so which have elapsed since its publication ;—are sufficient evidence of the fact of which I speak. And to this evidence we may add the manifestly increasing repugnance to the use of the so-called Athanasian Creed in the public services of the Church—a repugnance, which is directed not only to the damnatory, or (as it is now the fashion to call them) the minatory, clauses of the Creed ; but which extends also to the definitions and distinctions, with which the Creed abounds.

I shall hope to show you, by and by, what there is that is sound and healthy in this repugnance and in that dislike. But, before doing this, I must endeavour to show you, what there is also in them that is false, and morbid, and dangerous. In the last few days there have come in my way two works, which seemed to me to have a curious indirect bearing upon the subject which we are discussing. One is a little volume, called 'The Sacred Poetry of Early Religions,' consisting of two lectures delivered in St. Paul's Cathedral by the present Dean of St. Paul's, in which the Psalms of our Bible are contrasted with the earliest religious poems and hymns of India and Persia. The other is a work by that truly noble-minded man, who was so recently our honoured visitor, Bishop Callaway ; and is called 'The Religious System of the Amazulu and other Tribes of South Africa.' Both works left upon my own mind a strong conviction of the utter powerlessness, morally and spiritually, of any religious belief, which is not solidified into some definite form. The tendency of such a belief is either to die out altogether, leaving nothing in its place, or to give rise to monstrous forms of misbelief. Thus, in the case of the tribes of South Africa, there seem to exist among them the relics or *débbris* of some earlier and purer faith, or at least of some faint feeling after God ; yet so dim and vague was this faith or feeling, that it has come to be quite buried under a comparatively

elaborate system of ancestor worship and divination ; and it is even difficult, if not impossible, to say *what* word, if any, of their languages answers to what we mean by the word 'God.' You can easily imagine, what an obstacle is thus presented to the labours of the Christian Missionary, and what mistakes he is likely to commit, as he searches amongst the dark superstitions of these heathen tribes for some ground, common to himself and them, analogous to that upon which St. Paul took his stand, when he preached to the Athenians on Mars' hill from the text of the altar 'to the unknown God.'

If we pass from South Africa to India, what do we find ? It is a not uncommon fashion in these days to praise, almost with enthusiasm, the earliest sacred poetry of India, as though it might even be fitly compared with the early religious poetry of the Old Testament. Upon this point I must content myself with a brief extract from Dean Church's interesting Lectures.

The remarkable feature,' he says, 'about these early hymns is the absolutely indeterminate character of the object of worship and praise.'

'There are two things,' he says again, 'which, apart from their substance, deprive these Indian and Persian hymns of the value which is sometimes put upon them. 1. They are and have been for ages *dead relics*. No one pretends that they are now used, as they were when they were composed, and as a living part of worship. Those who actually felt and meant them in their real sense, have passed away long ago. The poems have been enshrined as sacred foundations and originals in systems unsympathetic and at variance with them ; and the life that is in them is drawn out by antiquarian and philosophic labour in the West, and has long ceased to breathe in the worship of the East. 2. Whatever these religions were at first,—and I am quite ready to see in them "grains of truth," to believe that there were in them often honest, earnest attempts to "feel after" and win Him who is not far from every one of us,—they all have a common and an unvarying history. They end in

hopeless and ignoble decay. In all instances, in all races, Aryan, Semitic, Turanian, as far as we see, the original religion, or the religious reform, failed, dwindled, passed into a formal and pedantic ceremonial ; passed into coarser and yet coarser forms of undisguised idolatry, monstrous, impure, or cruel. "*Who* is the God to whom we shall offer sacrifice?" was the refrain of the early Vedic hymn :—the ingenuity of Brahmin commentators turned the interrogative pronoun into the name of a god, and the interrogative sentence into a command to sacrifice to a god whose proper name was "*Who*."

And then he adds: 'It is impossible, it seems to me, to overlook, to over-estimate, the contrast. There is a collection of sacred poetry, not so old, it may be, certainly not in parts, as the Vedic and Zend hymns, but belonging to very early times, belonging certainly to what we now call the childhood of the race. The Vedic hymns are dead remains, known in their real meaning and spirit to a few students. The Psalms are as living as when they were written ; and they have never ceased to be, what we may be quite certain they have been *to-day*—this very day which is just ending—to hundreds and thousands of the most earnest of souls now alive. They were composed in an age at least as immature as that of the singers of the Veda ; but they are now what they have been for thirty centuries, the very life of spiritual religion ; they suit the needs, they express, as nothing else can express, the deepest religious ideas of "the foremost in the files of time."'

I have gone a little beyond my present purpose, in order to cite the whole of this striking passage. For my present purpose it is sufficient to insist upon what Dean Church calls 'the absolutely indeterminate character of the object of worship and praise' in these old Vedic hymns, and 'the hopeless and ignoble decay in which they end.' Now when the author of 'Literature and Dogma' seriously proposes to us, that we should think of God merely as 'the stream of tendency, making for righteousness,' or as something equally vague and indeterminate

as this,—one is compelled to ask, whether this proposal, which comes to us in the name of progress and advanced thought, be not really a step backwards, rather than a step forwards; and whether we may not at last be landed by such thinkers in a position, in which the religious belief, such as it is, which is left us, shall be as morally and spiritually impotent, as ever was the faith of those old Vedic singers, or of the ancestors of the heathen tribes of South Africa.

The point, then, to which I would bring you by such considerations as these—considerations which might be multiplied almost without limit—is the confession of the absolute necessity of a *definite* religious belief. Without some definite form or forms of faith, I cannot see, how the safe transmission of religious ideas from generation to generation can be adequately provided for; nor how those religious ideas can be brought to bear with real force and potency upon the individual soul and conscience. In this I find ample justification of the principle, which lies at the root of our Christian creeds. Whether our existing Christian creeds are right or wrong, true or false, is another question altogether. But the necessity of creeds in the abstract seems to me to be a conclusion irresistibly forced upon us by a variety of considerations, drawn from reason, history, and positive experience.

We pass from this first point to another. Can we justify, not only the principle of creeds, but our actual Christian creeds themselves? We have been singing in Church this morning what our Prayer-Book calls the ‘Confession of our Christian Faith, commonly called the Creed of Saint Athanasius.’ For I must confess to a great unwillingness to part with the Creed from our public services altogether; though I am increasingly sensible of its unsuitableness to the requirements of ordinary congregational worship. The force of exact definition could hardly go further than it does in this Creed. It carries us to the very antipodes of that fluctuating and absolutely indeterminate manner of expression, the perilous nature and results of

which we have already pointed out. May there not be as great a danger in rigid and precise definitions on such a subject, as in the entire absence of all definition?

There are those who would put down such inquiries as these with a high hand. They would say, 'We receive the creeds upon the authority of the Church, and we have no right nor title whatever to question them.' I was very much struck and delighted, and I could not but heartily agree, with what Bishop Callaway said in my hearing the other day on this subject of doubt. He said, 'As surely as men stifle doubts and crush them blindly out, so surely will they rise up again as spectres to haunt them.' Those who silence their adversaries, or who silence their own reason, with this weapon of Church authority, are certainly preparing a day of trouble for themselves, and for the Church, in the future. Sooner or later the reaction will set in; and the tide of doubt and unbelief will swell higher, in proportion as it has by such artificial and unnatural restraints been held back. If we of this generation avert our faces from difficult questions, and go on repeating the old formula, merely because it is the old formula, what is to become of those who will come after us? We cannot make ourselves really believe, by merely saying, 'I believe.' Where would the Church be now, if the earliest Christians had been as cowardly in this matter of doubt, as we find ourselves tempted to be? St. Peter says, 'Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.' Those earliest disciples and apostles of Christ fought the battle of the faith with weapons tempered in the fires of reason and conscience; and we, in our own day, must do the same.

I hold fast by the promise of Christ: 'Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world:' 'When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth.' I cannot think that such great and large promises were intended only for those who first heard them. I *must* believe, that they are



the charter of the Christian Church in every age ; that in every age the Spirit of Truth has been with the Church to guide it into that truth, which at the moment was needful for it. Now this conviction carries with it many important practical inferences.

In the first place, it compels us to look with deep and unaffected reverence upon the creeds, or stereotyped forms, in which the convictions of the Christian Church have from time to time expressed themselves. This reverence, however, will not be blind and indiscriminating. It will be apportioned to the amount of Christian assent, which each creed, or portion of a creed, can claim for itself. The old test,—that which was believed always, everywhere, and by all,—‘*Quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus,*’—is of lasting value. For example, it is impossible to regard the Athanasian Creed with the same reverence as the Nicene ; or to view the clause ‘He descended into hell’ of the Apostles’ Creed, as of equal value with the rest ; or to accept the ‘*Filioque*’ of the Nicene Creed as standing on the same level of authority as the remainder of the Creed.

In the next place, no creed can be accepted as absolutely final. The power which made, can also unmake or remake. It does not follow, that modes of thought and forms of expression, which were best for the Church of the fourth or the Church of the eighth century, are also best for the Church of this nineteenth century. It is competent, not merely to the Church universal (which indeed has no longer any organ for the task), but to every local and national Church, to revise, if need be, its creeds, articles, liturgies, and other formularies. There ought to be a clear necessity for undertaking such a task, because the evils and mischiefs of it are manifold. But when the necessity arises, the power is there ; nay more, the responsibility, the obligation is there. The Church of Ireland is engaged at the present time in revising the Prayer-Book ; nay, has actually revised the Athanasian Creed. In so doing it has

not exceeded its powers one whit ; whether it be using them wisely and well, or not.

Now at this point we strike upon the question (already referred to) of the not uncommon repugnance to the exact definitions of the Athanasian Creed, and of the extent to which that repugnance is sound and healthy or not. As I have already said, no creed that the Church has ever framed, except in so far as it is (like four-fifths of the Apostles' Creed) merely a recital of facts, can be considered absolutely final. As soon as you begin to attempt to define the Divine nature,—as the Athanasian Creed does, and, to a less extent, the Nicene,—such attempts can only be regarded as tentative and experimental ; words 'thrown out' at a vast object, which, with all the skill of their framing, are still only words, and are therefore haunted with the infirmity and imperfection, from which human speech can never escape. The Athanasian Creed itself confesses this, when it says—'The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, and the Holy Ghost incomprehensible,'—meaning, as it does, by the word 'incomprehensible,' that which eludes and baffles definition, and cannot be comprehended in any form of words. Now in so far as the repugnance to the strict definitions of the Athanasian Creed arises out of a deep reverential feeling of the vastness, and grandeur, and immensity of the Object, which it is attempted to define,—that repugnance is sound and healthy. But at the same time candour and honesty ought to constrain such objectors to confess, that the creed itself frankly recognizes the vastness of the Object and the inability of human speech to do anything like justice to it.

'Why attempt it, then, at all?'—it may be asked. The responsibility of the attempt, we reply, does not rest upon us ; neither is it incumbent upon us,—neither is it, indeed, possible for us,—at this distance of time, to judge those who made the attempt. *Our* responsibility is limited to the question of revising the Creed itself, or at least its use in the Church and by the members of the Church. But, meanwhile, and pending

the settlement of this question, we shall do well to ponder the language of the Creed, and to endeavour to realize the great truths which underlie it, and which it strives to give expression to. Most happily for us, our own Church bids us take everything—creeds, formularies, articles, everything—to the one authoritative rule of faith and fount of spiritual illumination, the Holy Scriptures, and interpret them, in whole and in part, in the light of those Scriptures. It is this wonderful freedom and elasticity, which are so characteristic of our own beloved Church of England, that prevent this question of the Creeds from pressing with undue and injurious force upon the minds of those, who loyally accept that cardinal principle of our Church system, which is expressed in the VIth Article of Religion thus: ‘Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any that it should be believed as an article of the faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation.’

And now, in conclusion, let me endeavour to place myself and you at the right point of view for understanding, and appreciating, and doing justice to this really grand old Creed of the Western Church, which by some unaccountable misnomer has come to be attributed to the hand of Athanasius. The language of it may sound cold, formal, abstruse, metaphysical; but the truths which it strives, however inadequately, to express, are truths by which the souls of men—of rich and poor, learned and unlearned alike—live. We can forgive the inadequacy of the effort, in the feeling of the importance of the subject.

First of all, then, I trace in the language of the Creed an earnest endeavour to assert—what the Holy Scriptures always assert, what so much of our modern theology is a flat denial of—the absolute identity between the will of the Son on earth and the will of the Father in heaven. ‘Lo, I come to do thy will, O God,’—*This*, as the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews

shows us, is the briefest yet completest epitome of the purpose of the life and death of Jesus Christ. And this is what the Creed affirms, though in language too metaphysical to be intelligible to many of us, when it cautions us against 'dividing the Substance,' or denying the Unity, of the Godhead.

I have so often insisted upon this point, and upon the division of the Substance and the denial of the Unity, which are involved in some modern theories of the nature of Christ's atoning work, that I need not dwell longer upon it now. One more point we have time for, and only one. There can be no doubt, that the pith and heart of the whole Creed are comprised in the words: 'The Catholic Faith is this: That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the Substance.' 'How perplexing! how incredible! how impossible!'—we are all of us tempted to exclaim. 'How can the One be Three, and the Three One?' Yes; but did it never strike you, that the Creed always intended us to feel the perplexity; that it sets out, in fact, with the frankest confession of the mystery, the incomprehensibility, the impossibility of defining the Divine nature? If you define the Divine nature—as the Mahometan does—as the absolute unity of one sovereign almighty will, you lose this sense of the mystery,—you abandon the confession of the incomprehensibility of God. Not only so, you lose much more; you abandon what is, perhaps, even more important than this. The faith of the Catholic Church affirms, that the throne of heaven is not a solitary throne; that the will, which lies at the root of all things and upon which all things rest, is a will into which love essentially, and from all eternity, enters. There is *that* in it, which we upon earth call fatherhood, sonship, a unity of the spirit. Of course, all those words, such as 'begotten,' 'proceeding,' and the like, which the Creed employs, are words 'thrown out'—let us say again, as the author of 'Literature and Dogma' has wisely taught us to say—'at an Infinite Object.' But what they strive, however

feebly, to express, is ever this thought of the ineffable mystery of the Divine nature, of which love is no accidental emotion, but an integral and essential part;—love, which, when the fulness of the time was come, revealed itself in the human life of the Son of God for the salvation of the world.

Such is the root-idea of the Catholic Faith; and the Creed, which formulates it, may well be dear to us, in spite of all its blemishes, all its unavoidable imperfections. Many thoughts crowd upon us here, and questions which one would fain ask and answer. We must postpone them to another occasion. We are brought back at last to the words from which we started:—the *child's* speech, and understanding, and thoughts, and the *man's*; the *part*-knowledge; the present view 'through a glass, darkly,'—literally, by means of a mirror, in a riddle,—contrasted with the future seeing 'face to face,' and knowing even as we are known. So it must be, and so we must be content that it should be. The more faithfully and diligently we use the present partial knowledge, and vision through a glass and in a riddle; the better shall we be prepared for that perfect vision and perfect knowledge hereafter, which are to transform us into the Divine image. For St. John says, 'We know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him: for we shall see him as he is.'

'Then shall we see Thee as Thou art,  
For ever fixed in no unfruitful gaze,  
But such as lifts the new-created heart,  
Age after age, in worthier love and praise.'

## SERMON XXXI.

## THE USE AND ABUSE OF DOGMA.

2 TIMOTHY i. 12.

I know whom I have believed.

THE words of my text are some of St. Paul's last words ; or, at least, are some of the last words of his, that have come down to us. He wrote them to Timothy from his prison at Rome, whilst his trial was actually proceeding, the issue of it no longer doubtful, and 'the time of his departure,' as he calmly calls it, near at hand.

A good man at the present day, writing a letter under similar circumstances, with death staring him in the face, to an intimate friend, would be likely to write, *not*, 'I know *whom* I have believed,' *but*, 'I know *what* I have believed.' It comes more natural to us to express our religious convictions so,—to think more of the 'what' than of the 'whom,'—to cling rather to the creed, or doctrinal system, than to the Living Person, to whom system and creed bear witness. Of course, the doctrinal system implies the Living Person ; but the system is nearer to our thoughts, than the Person. With St. Paul it was otherwise. To him the Living Person—God our Father, Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour—was everything, was all in all ; the system was nothing,—nay, we may say, had no existence. Therefore it is, that, in view of death and judgment, and all that is most

trying to human faith and courage, he writes, 'Nevertheless I am not ashamed,'—I feel no fear,—'for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day.' Now this is a matter, which both requires and deserves the most careful elucidation. It has a very important bearing upon present difficulties and pressing questions of the day.

St. Paul was trained up, as a boy and a young man, in an elaborate religious system, of which the Scribes were the expositors, and the Pharisees the devoted adherents. He was at one time, as he tells us, an enthusiastic votary of this system himself. But the moment came at last, when he found himself compelled to renounce this system utterly, to cast himself at the foot of the cross, and to consecrate his whole life to the love and the service of Jesus Christ. From that moment Christ was everything to him. Strictly speaking, he no longer had anything that could be called a religious system. *All was Christ.* Take one or two of his most expressive phrases, and you will feel how true this is: 'To me to live is Christ.' 'I am crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me.' 'My little children, of whom I travail in birth again, until Christ be formed in you.' 'What things were gain to me, these I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord . . . . . that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.'

We, too, have been trained up, more or less carefully, in an elaborate religious system, of which the creeds and formularies of our Church are the authentic exposition, but which is modified and enlarged, to an extent of which we are often quite unconscious, by the school of religious opinion—high, low, or broad, as the case may be—in which we have been educated, or to which we have, by our own choice, attached ourselves. Must we break with this system, as St. Paul broke with the religious

system in which he had been educated, in order to find, as he found, Christ? Must we learn to say with him, in the sense in which he said it, 'What things were gain to me, these I counted loss for Christ'? Or is it given to *us* to travel by a road which was denied to *him*,—to preserve unbroken the continuity of religious thought,—to bind our days, each to each, by natural piety,—and still to reach the goal, which St. Paul reached, and where alone peace can be found, 'Jesus Christ, and him crucified'?

Here we are in fact touching what I have called one of the most pressing questions of the day, the use and abuse of dogma. And here we find ourselves in presence of two conflicting tendencies—two tendencies which run absolutely counter, the one to the other; *one*, an impatience, a fierce intolerance of dogma; the *other*, an equally fierce insistence upon dogma, as almost the one thing needful for these latter days, and the sole antidote for their disorders. You know the battle-cries of the two contending parties; *one*, demanding definite, distinctive, dogmatic, Church teaching; the *other*, demanding, not dogma, but religion.

At times of angry religious strife like the present, it always fares ill with those, who detest the excesses of each side, and believe that it is possible to do justice to both, without becoming the partisan of either. If we cared only for a quiet, easy, comfortable life, we should pray to be delivered from the perilous spirit of candour and fairness, and to be filled with the spirit of blind partisanship instead. But there is something better than ease and quiet and comfort; and *that* is, to serve our generation by the will of God, and then fall asleep when our work is done. Spite of the fierce strife between these contending parties, we must try to do justice to each, though it be to the anger and scorn of both.

Observe, then, first of all, that it is impossible for us to put ourselves exactly in St. Paul's position, or to get at his result precisely in his way. Eighteen centuries lie between us



and him—eighteen centuries of controversy, of division, of development. Dogma is an inevitable growth of time, as every one may learn from his own experience. The opinions of any person who thinks at all, and in proportion as he thinks, pass with lapse of time out of a semi-fluid state into one that is fixed and solid. We come gradually to certain conclusions on *this* subject and on *that*, upon which our minds have been at work; and these conclusions we can express in precise terms. Such conclusions are to the individual thinker, what dogmas are to the Christian Church. Dogmas are the settled conclusions, to which the Christian Church has come on a variety of subjects, after years, or it may be centuries, of thought and discussion and controversy. Such a movement was inevitable. The Church of the fifth or the tenth or the nineteenth century could not be as the Church of the first. As the years went on, questions arose, which could not but be answered; and the answer was a dogma. St. Paul had never formulated to himself the dogma of the Trinity in Unity: but in the lapse of centuries that dogma became a necessity of Christian thought. The language of the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds would have been unintelligible to him: but, for all that, it was the inevitable outcome of the Church's intellectual life.

But then, this development of dogma—necessary as it is, beneficial as it may be—must never be confounded with the reality of spiritual worship,—that worship of the Father in spirit and in truth, of which Jesus says: 'The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.' It moves along a lower level altogether—the level of the understanding, not of the spirit or of the soul. We may assent entirely to every statement of the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds, and yet be none the better men for doing so. Herein lies the peril of that vehement insistence upon dogmatic teaching, which is so com-

mon in these days. Unless it be most carefully guarded, it leads straight to the conclusion, that to hold the right dogmas is to be in the way of life. Whereas we may hold them all, and hold them stoutly, and yet be in the way of death and not of life. For 'the light of life' is not dogmas, but something very different. Let us listen again to the words of Jesus: 'I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.' Yes; 'He that followeth me, who am the world's true light, shall have the light of life.' The light of life, the light which quickens, the light which is life, can be ours only on condition that we follow Christ. No orthodoxy, however vigorous and unflinching, can be a substitute for this.

Dogmatic developments, then, are one thing; the religious or spiritual life of the soul is another thing. And the former may, certainly, be so handled and used, as to give no help to the latter. Yet there is, undoubtedly, a relation between the two; and the former may be made to minister to the latter, if we will. And the question is, What is this relation? and, How may the dogmatic development be made subservient to the spiritual life?

Christ says, 'I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.' Life, eternal life, salvation, redemption, righteousness: such words as these express the first and the last thought of the Gospel of Christ, the aim of which is ever to touch and quicken and heal the souls of men. First in the historical order, and first in the order of thought, comes the spiritual reality, 'the word of life; ' afterwards the dogmatic form and framework. The latter is, as it were, the body, of which the former is the soul. The latter springs, with time, out of the former, through the action of the intellect upon the thoughts and phrases, in which that word of life expresses itself. And as the dogmatic development springs out of these spiritual elements, so it may be resolved back again into the spiritual elements out of which it has sprung.

And herein lies the truest and highest use of dogmas ; and also the test, by which we may discern and distinguish between those dogmatic developments which are false and those which are true.

The words of Jesus are, as we should expect they would be, the purest conceivable expression of spiritual truth, with the slightest possible admixture of anything extraneous and unessential. For this very reason it is often exceedingly difficult to grasp their import,—always quite impossible to exhaust their fulness. Who, for example, has ever fathomed the depth of meaning that lies hid in such words as these : ‘Whosoever will save his life shall lose it ; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it :’ ‘He that loveth his life shall lose it ; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal :’ ‘Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone ; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.’ When we pass from the words of Jesus to the words of his apostles, we trace the first beginnings of that inevitable action of the human intellect upon spiritual truth, of which the growth of dogma is the result. It could not be otherwise. The disciple could not be altogether as the Master. But though we may thus trace in the Epistles of the New Testament the development of the first ‘organic filaments,’ out of which in time would be constructed the full-grown body of Christian dogma,—the shooting of the little spikes of ice across the waters of life and salvation, which would eventually lead on to the fixity and rigidity of the whole ;—yet are they so full of light, from proximity to the Fountain of all light, that the spiritual always predominates over the intellectual, and the spiritual elements of their teaching are visible on the surface, or scarcely below the surface, of the words in which it is couched. No effort is required to resolve or translate their statements of truth back into their spiritual elements. But, as time went on, the intellectual form began more and more to predominate over the spiritual substance ; until, at last, it has come to be often

no slight task to disentangle the one from the other, and so to get at *that*, which is spiritual; and which, being spiritual, can be made food and refreshment and life to the soul.

My meaning will, I trust, become plain, as I proceed to illustrate it by examples. We say, in the Nicene Creed, of our Lord Jesus Christ, that He is 'of one substance with the Father.' Here is dogma. Not one in a million, if one at all, can digest the truth in this form, to the nourishment of his soul's life. We must translate it by the help of our Lord's own words: 'I and my Father are one:' 'I came not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me:' 'He that hath seen me hath seen the Father:' 'All things are delivered unto me of my Father; and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.' We must translate it thus, I say, into its spiritual elements, before we can feed upon it. Having done this, we look at Jesus; and, behold, we are seeing God. In the grace and truth of Jesus we see the reflection of the grace and truth of the eternal and the invisible God. The will of the Son being ever at one with the will of the Father, in every act and every word of Jesus we see a revelation of the Father. Thus Jesus is the way to the Father, and the only way; for no other thing or being can be to *us* on the one side, and to God on the other, what He is. Now it is impossible thus to see in Him the way and the truth, and thus to use Him practically as the way and the truth, without finding Him to be also the life. Our souls are quickened and fed, as we see thus and use thus. We have broken through the hard dogmatic shell of the Creed, and are in the presence of that, which is indeed light and life. But, having done this, we can honour the shell for the sake of its contents; we can honour the casket for the sake of the jewel which it inshrines.

Again, in the same Creed we say, 'I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and giver of life, who proceedeth from the

Father and the Son.' Here, once more, is dogma ; and dogma of a most instructive kind,—displaying as it does the peril of too subtle defining and of intruding into a region beyond human ken, to which all dogmatic developments are exposed, and the only safe-guard against which is the constant recurrence to the spiritual elements out of which they spring. We all know what those words 'and the Son' have done for the Christian Church, and what controversies, strifes, and divisions have arisen out of them. But I never heard that any question was ever raised over that word '*proceedeth*.' And yet, surely, this is the all-important word, practically and spiritually, for *us*. The Holy Spirit of God '*proceedeth*,' as Lord and Life-giver, *whence* ? 'From God,' let us reply, without further controversy. But *whither* ? Let St. Paul translate for us into the required spiritual elements : 'Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.' Alas ! for Christendom ! that it should have disputed, even to the extremity of an apparently irreparable schism, over the question, whether the procession of the Holy Ghost were single or double,—from the Father only, or from the Father and the Son ; forgetting in the heat of the dispute, that the procession itself is the all-important thing and fact and truth for a desolate, sin-wasted humanity. For this faith in a proceeding personal Spirit means *this* for a world lying in sorrow and wickedness, that God, the Father of our spirits, is actually seeking us by his Spirit ; that, in the very root and centre of our being, we are in contact with the living God, as Lord and Life to us ; that 'God is working in us,' as St. Paul says again, 'both to will and to do of his good pleasure,' and that therefore we must 'work out our own salvation with fear and trembling.' Now it is impossible to believe in this movement of God towards *us*, without a corresponding movement of our spirits towards *Him*, as of children towards a most loving and righteous Father. Thus the Creed registers a fact, which is of transcendent importance to the life of the soul. It registers ; and, by registering,

hands on the sacred deposit from one generation to another. More it cannot do ; but this is much. Each generation in turn must still translate the formula back into its spiritual elements in the light of the Holy Scriptures, or the formula by itself will profit us nothing. It will remain only a formula,—barren, lifeless, and inoperative.

It is the distinctive mark, and I hold it to be the special glory, of our Church, that she requires us to take our Creeds, articles, formularies, to the Holy Scriptures, and translate them there, out of their cold dogmatic form, into the warmth and life of their spiritual elements. According to her teaching, the Holy Scriptures alone are the source and test of Divine truth. Creeds, Councils, Churches, everything, must submit to this test. Listen to an extract or two from our Articles of Religion. ‘The three creeds, Nicene Creed, Athanasius’s Creed, and that which is commonly called the Apostles’ Creed, ought thoroughly to be received and believed ; *for* they may be proved by most certain warrants of Holy Scripture.’ ‘General councils may err, and sometimes have erred, even in things pertaining unto God. Wherefore things ordained by them as necessary to salvation have neither strength nor authority, *unless* it may be declared that they be taken out of Holy Scripture.’ ‘As the Church of Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Antioch have erred ; so also the Church of Rome hath erred, not only in their living and manner of ceremonies, but also in matters of faith.’ ‘Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation, so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation.’

Not only so ; not only does the Church of England affirm in this distinct and sweeping way, that the Holy Scriptures are the one source and test of Divine Truth ; but she also puts the Bible in the hands of the clergy, and in the hands of the laity too, and she says to the former : ‘Now teach the people

committed to your charge out of this one Book.' Listen to the following question and answer from the Office for the Ordering of Priests in our Prayer-Book: 'Are you persuaded that the Holy Scriptures contain sufficiently all doctrine required of necessity for eternal salvation through faith in Jesus Christ? and are you determined out of the said Scriptures to instruct the people committed to your charge, and to teach nothing, as required of necessity to eternal salvation, but that which you shall be persuaded may be concluded and proved by the Scripture?' And the answer, which at that solemn moment every priest of the English Church makes, is this: 'I am so persuaded, and have so determined by God's grace.'

So far we have been dealing with the questions: 'What is the relation of dogma to religion?' and, 'How may the dogmatic development be made to minister to the religious life?' And our answer to these questions may be summed up thus: Christ's own words, first and before all, go straight to the springs of the religious life, that is, the life of faith and hope and love, of aspiration and endeavour; and, after these, the words of his apostles. Christian dogma grows out of the unavoidable action of the human intellect upon these words, and upon the thoughts which they express. In order to minister to the soul's true life, such dogma must be translated back, by the aid of the Holy Scriptures, into the spiritual elements out of which it has sprung. I have yet to endeavour to show you, how the same principle and method will enable us to distinguish and discriminate between false dogmatic developments and those which are true. And this is a point of immense importance, in view of such dogmas as the Immaculate Conception and Papal Infallibility; for which is claimed an authority and a certainty, equal to those of the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father and the procession of the Holy Ghost. We, who as Protestants stand aghast at such a claim, are bound to show why, and on what principle, we recognize and allow certain dogmatic developments, whilst we denounce and repudiate others.

I start again from the words of Jesus: 'I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life;' that is to say, 'I am the light of men; set yourselves to follow me, and then you will find, that I am light to you,—a light which quickens, and so enables you to follow me.' And I would begin by asking you to consider the association of the thoughts in these words: Christ, the light of the world; that light, quickening or life-giving; the life thus given, shown in the imitation of Christ. If, however, it be urged, that it is a strained interpretation of the words of Jesus to find these thoughts, thus associated, in them; then I would ask you, whether, apart from these particular words, the association of the thoughts in question does not pervade the entire volume of the New Testament. Take, for example, such phrases as the following: 'I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation:' 'Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth:' 'Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free:' 'Sanctify them by thy truth; thy word is truth:' 'As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.' Can there be any doubt, that the unanimous testimony of Jesus and his disciples is this;—That it is the essential property of Divine truth to quicken the soul, and that this quickening of the soul manifests itself necessarily in a new life, outward and inward, of which Christ is the model. 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.' In other words, theology is inseparable from religion, and religion is inseparable from morality. The theology, which does not tend to quicken the life of God in the soul, is not a true theology; and the religion, which does not manifest itself in pure thought and righteous action, is not true religion.

When, then, it becomes a question of the truth or falsehood of any particular dogmatic development, the testing process with reference to it will take two forms. We shall ascertain



whether, or no, it can be resolved or translated back into any spiritual elements,—into any rays of that light, of which it is said, ‘I am the light of the world.’ And, again, we shall ascertain, if possible, what are its direct effects upon human conduct and character. Does it tend, or not, to produce that new life, of which Jesus Christ is the pattern? If it *does*; then, unquestionably, there are in it rays of the true light, though mixed, it may be, with much error, and crossed by many bands of darkness. It must be our endeavour to disengage the rays of light from the darkness which accompanies them.

All this will become clear, as we proceed to illustrate it by examples. Take, first of all, the two dogmas already referred to, Papal Infallibility and the Immaculate Conception; which both claim to be legitimate developments of Christian doctrine, founded, *one* upon the words, ‘Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church,’ and the *other* upon the angel’s salutation, ‘Hail, thou that art highly favoured; the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou amongst women.’ Time alone can show, what will be the whole of their effect upon conduct and character in the community which has adopted them. But, promulgated as they are under threat of excommunication, if they be doubted or denied even in thought, what can their immediate effect be? Certainly not spiritual freedom,—not the freedom of the children of God,—not that freedom, of which Christ says, ‘If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed;’ and St. Paul, ‘Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.’ And when we try to reduce them into spiritual elements, capable of nourishing the soul’s inner life, we find it absolutely impossible to do so. We can detect in them not a single ray of the light of life. True dogma should lead to St. Paul’s result,—Christ, and only Christ: but these lead away from Christ. True dogma should help to bring us into fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ; but these bear no testimony either to the Father or to the Son.

Or take, again, one of the many dogmatic developments which may be found within the pale of our own Church, though without having received her special authentication. Take the modern doctrine of justification by faith, in the form in which it is commonly held, at least by one school of religious thought amongst us. It may, I think, be expressed thus :—That if a man believes that Jesus Christ suffered the punishment of his sins in his stead upon the cross, God will forgive him his sins, and admit him to everlasting happiness after death. Time teaches one to be very tolerant even of the strangest theories, provided there is, as there often is, a root of spiritual life and meaning in them. The form may be altogether wrong; and yet that distorted form may be the mode, in which not a few souls have found what has been life and peace to them. The form must be corrected; for, in so far as it is wrong and distorted, it is also evil and mischievous. But it must be corrected gently and tenderly, out of reverence for the fact that immortal souls have found salvation through it. It is so in this case. Through a preaching of the Gospel, having this theory for its foundation, many have come to a sense of God's hatred of sin and God's love of sinful men, which have stirred the fountain of the spiritual life within them to its depths, and made them new creatures in Christ Jesus. But this does not exempt us from the necessity of taking such a dogmatic development (for so we must call it) to the light of the Holy Scriptures, and of translating it there into its spiritual elements, so as to discern what is true in it from what is false.

The dogma in question is a very complex one. We must resolve it by the help of such words as these: 'He bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead unto sins, might live unto righteousness;' 'He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him, who died and rose again for them;'—where the moral, regenerating effect of Christ's atoning sufferings and death upon the human heart is the one thing thought of:—and, again,

by the help of such words as these: 'Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.' Yes, 'justified by faith;' but by faith in whom, or in what? St. Peter's reply is, 'That your faith and hope might be in God.' And St. Paul's standing example of justifying faith is the example of Abraham; and, particularly that incident in Abraham's life, the record of which runs thus:—'He brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. And he believed in the Lord: and he counted it to him for righteousness.' The faith which justified Abraham was simple confidence in God, childlike trust in his word. St. Paul urged,—against those who proposed to build up a righteousness of their own, on the ground of which they could claim favour and acceptance with God,—that the faith which justified Abraham is the only thing that ever did, or ever could, justify a man,—that is, set him right with God, or put him in the true attitude towards God, and so give him peace; and that the work of Christ, including his sufferings and death, was directed towards establishing men in this simple, childlike trust in God, with all the blessings of righteousness, peace, and joy, thence arising. Now in this we touch at once the springs of the spiritual life within us; and here are the true spiritual elements of the dogma which we are discussing. For what is it that we all want, and want most, for the right conduct of our lives here, and for our preparation for the life which awaits us hereafter? Is it not this quietness and confidence towards God, as of children towards a most wise, just, and loving Father? Is it not faith in God through Jesus Christ our Lord?—and, through that faith, righteousness inward and outward; and, through that 'righteousness which is of faith,' peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord?

It would be easy to multiply examples; but enough has been said to explain both the method which I suggest, and the mode of its application. The history of the Christian Church

is, under one aspect, the history of the development of Christian doctrine ;—developments, seldom absolutely false, never absolutely true, always requiring to be taken to the light of the Holy Scriptures, to be tested, verified, and vivified in that light. How could it be otherwise, seeing that they dealt with the unsearchable riches of Christ, and strove, in each case, to comprise a fragment of those riches in some form of words? Each generation of Christendom in turn has seen something of those riches, which was hidden from others. No one generation has yet seen the whole. Now, that this should be so, has many lessons for us ; one or two of which we will set down, and so bring our subject to a conclusion.

First of all, it devolves upon each generation in turn a grave responsibility ; for each in turn may be put to the necessity of revising the work of its predecessors,—such revision being rendered necessary by the peculiar circumstances of the generation, in and for which the work is done. The generation which framed the Nicene Creed was not infallible ; neither was the generation which framed the so-called Creed of St. Athanasius infallible ; neither is our own generation infallible. But if we believe, as we may believe, that the Church of the fourth century, or the Church of the tenth, was guided into such truth as was required for the spiritual life of its children ; so must we believe the same of the Church of this nineteenth century. For English churchmen there is no such thing as the ‘non possumus’ of a Pope. Our faith in the ever-proceeding Spirit of God forbids it. If it should be shown to be incumbent upon us to revise our creeds and formularies, we both *can* do so, and we *must*. We still hold by the promise : ‘Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world :’ and, ‘When he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth.’

And whilst saying this, and claiming this our lawful liberty, we can also do full justice to the generations which have preceded us, and recognize the immense debt of gratitude which we owe to them. They have registered, for their own benefit and for

ours, that aspect of the 'unsearchable riches,' which it was given to them to see. Every succeeding generation is bound to take full and reverent account of the labours of its predecessors, on pain of forfeiting something—some aspect of truth—which it would be most perilous and damaging to lose.

And this, last of all, teaches us a much-needed lesson of humility, charity, and tolerance. You know the familiar lines :—

'Our little systems have their day ;  
They have their day and cease to be ;  
They are but broken lights of Thee ;  
And Thou, O Lord, art more than they.'

If this be true, as it is, of our systems, our most elaborate systems of doctrine—systems, which have been the production, not of some isolated thinker, but of a whole generation, or even century, of thinkers ; if Christ be, as He is, more, a thousand times more, than all these, and infinitely better and more glorious than they ;—how much more, and how much better must He be, than the poor thoughts about Him and about his work, which any one single Christian teacher, even the most eminent, can frame and utter. Nay, St. Paul himself, after endeavouring to systematize the operations of the eternal will of God in its electing and predestinating action upon nations and individuals, is constrained at last to break loose from the trammels even of his own lofty speculations, and to exclaim in mingled wonder, joy, and adoration,—'O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God ! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out ! For who hath known the mind of the Lord ? or who hath been his counsellor ? or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again ? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things : to whom be glory for ever. Amen.'

## SERMON XXXII.

## MYSTERY AND DOGMA.

JOB xxviii. 20, 21.

Whence then cometh wisdom? and where is the place of understanding?  
seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living.

A FEW days ago the remark was made to me, 'that it seemed as if the present tendency of things went strongly in the direction of banishing the element of mystery out of our religion; that the child-feeling of awe and wonder and simple faith was in danger of becoming extinct; that a religion without mystery was no religion at all, was not worth having; that, for example, in the days of our fathers it was enough to say of any statement of fact or doctrine, "It is in the Bible," and the answer was at once held to be conclusive and final; whereas, *now*, such an answer only furnished the starting-point for a fresh series of inquiries, in which the Bible was no longer treated as the ultimate Court of Appeal in matters of religious belief and truth.'

The very next day there appeared, in the 'Times' newspaper, a long article, occupying nearly four columns of close print, headed, 'Natural Science and Free Thought.' The article may have escaped your notice; but it was full of interest and importance—of interest and importance for those who are *not* readers of the 'Times,' as well as for those

who *are*. It was a review of a remarkable discourse delivered by a well-known German Professor, as distinguished in politics as in science—Professor Virchow, of Berlin; a discourse delivered by him in September last before the Annual Conference of German Naturalists,—a gathering which nearly corresponds to the annual meetings of our British Association. The review contains large extracts from this discourse, translated by the reviewer from the German original. I confess that I have not read for a long time anything so cheering and hopeful as these extracts—cheering and hopeful, as indicating the dawn of a better period, when science and theology, the equally mischievous dogmatism of both being equally discarded, can be at peace. At present, it seems to me, it is the dogmatism of science that stands in the way of the much-needed reconciliation, even more than the dogmatism of theology. The repudiation of that dogmatism in the name of science, and in the interest of science, and by a most distinguished master of science—it was *this* that struck me as the specially hopeful and important feature of the discourse, so opportunely brought to my knowledge through the ‘Times’ review. I want to explain this in such a way as may, I hope, gain the attention and interest of all who hear me to-night, however ignorant and unintelligent they may be; and then you will see, how it bears upon that question of ‘mystery,’ from which I set out, and which is matter of such vital concern to us all.

The title of the discourse of the German Professor is, ‘The Freedom of Science in the Modern State,’ and the ‘Times’ reviewer says of it: ‘The discourse is a most serious and impressive protest, in the name and interests of true science, against that pseudo-scientific dogmatism, which, first, propounds unverified speculations as the conclusions of science; next, reiterates them in the circle of admiring disciples and on the lecturer’s platform, till their universal acceptance is boldly assumed, and every doubter is branded as an old-fashioned fool of the “pre-scientific age;” and which ends by demanding

that its dogmas should form a part of that universal primary education, the proper direction of which is just now one of the most serious subjects of discussion in England as well as in Germany.'

A short extract or two will show the tendency and quality of the discourse better than anything else can do. In one place the Professor says: 'I have been teaching my science for more than thirty years, and I venture to say that during those thirty years I have honestly laboured, for my own part, continually to put off the subjective character more and more, and to bring myself ever more and more into the objective current:—that is to say (translating German thought into English), to lay less and less stress upon the theories by which I account for the facts, and to give increasing weight and emphasis to the facts themselves. 'Nevertheless, I freely confess that it is impossible for me entirely to renounce the subjective spirit;—or, in other words, to cease to propound theories, which, as I think, bind the facts together into clearness and coherence. 'Every year I am continually seeing afresh that I myself, on the very ground where I thought I had become entirely objective, have still always retained a large portion of subjective ideas. I do not go so far as to make from human nature the impossible demand, that every one should show himself without a subjective vein of thought; but I do say that we must set ourselves the task to put forth in the front rank what is properly actual knowledge, and whenever we go beyond this we must always say to the learners, "Observe that this is not proved, but is my opinion, my idea, my theory, my speculation." . . . . . Let us be moderate; let us patiently resign ourselves always to give out, as problems only, even the most favourite speculations that we set up, never ceasing to repeat a hundred-fold a hundred times, "Do not take this for established truth; be prepared to find that it is otherwise; only, for the moment, we are of opinion that it may possibly be so."'

Oh! that science had always spoken *so!* with such wise



and studied moderation! with such calm and admirable patience! Had it always spoken so, the controversy between it and theology would have been now at a very different stage of adjustment, than it actually is. The preliminary terms of peace would have been formulated; an armistice would have been declared; and the final settlement would have been by this time under discussion:—whereas, as it is, the din of battle resounds on every side, the horizon is still dark and lowering with the storm of war, and the possible conditions of ultimate pacification are not yet generally known.

I take another short extract from the same address, in order to show the application of these general principles to a special case of peculiar interest:—

‘There are at this time,’ the Professor writes, ‘few students of nature who are not of opinion that man stands in some connection with the rest of the animal kingdom, and that such a connection may possibly be discovered. I am quite prepared for such a result, and I should neither be surprised nor astonished if the proof were produced that man had ancestors among other vertebrate animals. You are aware that I am now specially engaged in the study of anthropology; but I am bound to declare that every positive advance which we have made in the province of pre-historic anthropology has actually removed us further from the proof of such a connection. Anthropology is at present occupied with the question of fossil man. On the whole, we must acknowledge that there is a complete absence of any fossil type of a lower stage in the development of man. Nay, if we gather together the whole sum of the fossil men hitherto known, and put them side by side with those of the present time, we can decidedly pronounce that there are among living men a much greater number of individuals who show a relatively inferior type, than there are among the fossils known up to this time. As a matter of fact, we must positively recognize that, as yet, there always exists a

sharp line of demarcation between man and any other animal. From the repeated experience of the past we ought to take a signal warning, lest we should unnecessarily impose on ourselves the obligation, or succumb to the temptation, to draw conclusions at a time when we are not justified in so doing. Believe me, herein lies the great difficulty for every student of nature who addresses the world without. Whoever speaks or writes for the public is bound, in my opinion, to examine with two-fold exactness how much of that which he knows and says is objectively true. He is bound to take the greatest possible care that all the merely inductive generalizations which he makes, all his extended conclusions according to the laws of analogy, however obvious they may seem, be printed in smaller type under the text; and that in the text itself he puts nothing but what is really objective truth.'

Such, for many years, I have believed to be the true position and attitude of science; and I gratefully welcome the clear and weighty enunciation of it from so distinguished and influential a quarter. For theology, too, there is a corresponding position and attitude. Dr. Virchow says very truly (and I take his remarks as the starting-point of what I have further to say on this subject):—

'No Church can refuse to develop itself in the three directions now described: namely, in the middle and sufficiently broad path of faith, alongside of which there lies, on the one hand, a certain quantum of objective historical truth; on the other, a changeful course of subjective, and often very fanciful ideas. So far, the teaching of the Church and of science is alike; for the human mind is very uniform, and consequently it transfers the method which it follows in one domain to all the rest.'

If you come to think the thing carefully over, you will readily see that nothing is so hostile to mystery as dogmatism. The sense of mystery is the sense of vastness, indefiniteness, grandeur. Look over the wide ocean, when it is storm-swept,

from the vantage-ground of some tall cliff or rocky promontory, and you get a near earthly parallel to this spiritual sense of mystery. Or look up into the spangled heavens with their infinity of star-lit space on some clear frosty winter night, and you get a still nearer parallel to this same sense of mystery. Now the moment you come with your dogmas, to measure and explain everything, *that moment* the mystery, the vastness, the grandeur begin to vanish. When you have weighed and measured all, the indefiniteness, which was the very essence of the mystery, and of the charm of the mystery, has disappeared. Who that has travelled in some mountain region does not know the difference, in point of impressiveness, sublimity, and grandeur, between the view of some mountain pass, when the clouds wrap the summits of the hills and sweep in lazy folds down their sides, and the view of the same pass, when the shrouding mists are gone, and all is bare and naked and measurable to the eye?

Rightly understood, the facts of science and the facts of theology point us on to something infinitely greater and more mysterious than the dogmas by which we try to explain, and, in explaining, too often imprison and dwarf them. And yet we *must* have dogmas both in theology and in science. No progress, no tradition, is possible without them. We must learn to use them without abusing them; to use them to help us to take hold of the facts, and survey them, and feel the mystery and the glory of them. *Then* we shall be saved from the peril of that spirit of false dogmatism, which, both in science and in theology, has worked such untold mischief, both to each by itself, and to their mutual relations. Then, too, the real mystery, both of the kingdom of nature and of the kingdom of heaven, will be restored to us. We shall have no longer any occasion to complain that the element of mystery is being banished out of our religion by the tendencies of our day. Rather it will be restored to us an hundredfold; and, along with it, that true child-spirit of awe and wonder and faith, as to

which Jesus said: 'Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.'

And now let me try to make these general principles clear and luminous to you by one or two particular instances and examples. Let us take, first of all, an illustration from the field of science, in order to show how mutually destructive of one another are the sense of mystery and the spirit of false dogmatism; how inevitably the one recedes, as the other advances. Take that particular case with which one of the extracts which I have read you from Professor Virchow's address deals: the origin of man, and the theory of his development, by gradual transformation through a long course of ages and geological periods, out of some one or other class of the inferior animals. The theory, regarded merely as a theory, has done good service by guiding and stimulating a most diligent inquisition into the facts of the case. So long as it is employed thus, it is employed usefully and legitimately. The moment it is pressed beyond this point, the moment it is adopted and proclaimed as an unquestionable truth of science (the evidence for it being only what it is), *that moment* it becomes in the highest degree mischievous and prejudicial to the cause of science itself. Not only so: it dispels the sense of mystery and wonder and awe, which the facts themselves, calmly and dispassionately considered, invite us to. For, as Professor Virchow tells us, the facts are these:—Ascend high as you can up the stream of the past, through periods of time which must be measured not by thousands but by tens and hundreds of thousands of years, and still you find no deterioration of the human type, no approximation to the lower animals. The organism of the fossil man is at least as highly developed as the man of the present day. The facts are too large for the theory in which it is attempted imprison them. The facts leave on our minds a feeling of vastness and

indefiniteness, which the theory would rob us of. Our imagination turns with relief to the mysterious old words :—‘ And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.’ ‘ So God created man in his own image ; in the image of God created he him.’

Now this is one of the many points of contact and of conflict between science and theology at the present day. And it is very necessary for us, as earnest believers in revelation, to take up a sound and unassailable position at this and the many other similar points. We are quite right to unmask the pretensions of science falsely so called. In this particular instance we are quite right in calling attention to the fact, that this theory of development is a theory only,—a speculation, which the facts, as at present investigated and brought to light, entirely fail to bear out. But we are guilty of a great mistake, if we go beyond this, and commit our religious belief to the maintenance of the opposite view ; thus making, in fact, our Christian faith answer with its own life for the disproof of some scientific speculation, which might possibly turn out in the end to be true. I have often tried to show you—so often that I need not travel again over the well-worn argument to-night—that there is nothing in the theory of development, be it false or be it true, which militates against the spirit, nor even against the letter of the Bible, rightly understood. Let the men of science settle the matter amongst themselves, and bring conclusive evidence of the truth of the theory, and we shall know what to do. It may infringe upon some time-honoured interpretation of the language of the Bible, just as the astronomical discoveries of Copernicus and Galileo did more than three centuries ago ; but it will do nothing worse than this. And this result, after the experience of the past, we are surely prepared to meet with equanimity.

And now let us pass from the field of science to the more congenial field of theology. Here, too, the same law holds

good. Mystery and dogma are mutually antagonistic : as the one advances, the other recedes ; and, necessary and indispensable though dogma be, it must be made to know its place, and must never be suffered to encroach unduly upon that region of mystery, which is, to so large an extent, the home and native air of true religion.

I take then, first of all, the particular case to which my attention was called a week ago. I was reminded, and it is perfectly true, that, not so very many years ago, the Bible was for us Church people, as for Protestants generally, the ultimate tribunal of appeal. The infallibility of the Bible, or the plenary inspiration of the Bible, was the accepted dogma, which fenced the Holy Scriptures round, and forbade all criticism, all questioning, of their contents. And for some years now this fence has been broken down, and this dogma has been given up as untenable in the sense in which it used to be understood. And with what result ? At first unquestionably with the result of a very considerable, a very painful, a very distressing shaking of men's minds. It seemed as if the grounds of their belief had been suddenly cut from under them, and they knew not which way to turn for help. But beyond this first and (as I fully believe) only temporary result, there has been another, which is full of hope and promise and happy augury for the future. Such an impulse has been given to the study of the Holy Scriptures, as has not been known since that grand Reformation-time, when the Bible was set free from its prison of Latin and Greek and Hebrew, and put into the hands of the people as the rule of faith and the guide of life. And along with this increased and ever-increasing study of the Holy Scriptures, there has come a deeper and ever-deepening sense of their wonder and their glory. We are put in contact with the facts, and that contact makes us feel the mystery, which the dogma had too often hidden from our eyes. And in addition to this, we have been *led*, or rather we have been *forced*, to look within ourselves, and to ask what our own hearts have to tell us on these great

subjects, on which we used to be content with consulting the letter of our Bibles ; and surely *there* we may find, if we have not yet found,—*there*, where the Divine Spirit touches the human spirit,—a region of mystery, and mystery far more unbounded than any which we have lost.

Once more : I take *that*, which may in many ways be regarded as the great central historical fact of our Christian faith—the cross of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. It is not so very long ago, that the glory and the mystery of the cross were imprisoned in a dogma, which was supposed to be the one only authorized, nay, the one only possible, interpretation of it. This idol, too, like that of the infallibility of the Bible, has been shattered in that great shaking of earth and heaven, which these strange times of ours have witnessed. . And with what result ? With the result, I apprehend, of deepening and widening our views of religious truth in many more directions than this particular one. And in this particular direction, with the result, I apprehend, of making us feel the glory and the mystery of the cross, as we could never otherwise have been made to feel it. The shattered idol has been replaced by the living Christ. We can begin to feel something of what St. Paul felt, when he wrote those burning words of his, which breathe the very soul of true devotion : ‘But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, whereby the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.’ ‘I am crucified with Christ ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me ; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.’

I would that I could speak to you, dear brethren, on this grand theme with far greater force and clearness. It appears to me at times, that we are much too faint-hearted and desponding over the vast religious issues, that seem to have come in some respects to a crisis in our own day. The times are doubtless very hard indeed for those who are thoughtful and

intelligent, serious and in earnest. But I see no reason why we should 'bate one jot of heart or hope.' We have to be on our guard against false solutions. We have to close our ears against the siren voice, which woos us to take refuge on the barren shore of tradition and Church authority. We have 'still to bear up and steer right onward,' in humility, in patience, in reverence, in deep love and earnest search after truth, in strenuous effort to live sober, righteous, and dutiful lives. Then, in due season, we shall come to the haven where we would be. Better still, we shall have helped to lay down chart and course for those who shall come after us. The battle of our day is not for ourselves only, but for our children and our children's children. If we will only fight it out manfully and worthily, they too will enter with us into the blessings of the peace, which is most surely in store for the future,—and for the very near future too, *provided we do our part now*. So help us God, we *will* do it. Amen.



## SERMON XXXIII.

### LIGHT ITS OWN EVIDENCE.

LUKE xi. 33—36.

No man, when he hath lighted a candle, putteth it in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they which come in may see the light. The light of the body is the eye : therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light ; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness. Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness. If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light.

WE must look back as far as the fourteenth verse of the chapter, in order to pick up the thread which will serve as clue to the meaning of this obscure and intricate passage. A remarkable case of demoniacal possession is brought to Jesus to cure ; and He cures it so effectually, that the lost power of speech is instantaneously restored, to the amazement of the beholders. 'He was casting out a devil, and it was dumb. And it came to pass, when the devil was gone out, the dumb spake ; and the people wondered.' It is unnecessary to inquire into the exact nature of this case of possession, or into the nature of demoniacal possession in general ; because our subject in no way turns upon either. What we have to remark for our present purpose is simply the effect upon some of the bystanders. The effect was twofold. On one side there were

those who set to work to account for it to their own satisfaction, by the supposition of diabolical agency. And on another side there were those who said, 'This is *something* in the way of credentials to support his claim to be prophet or Christ; but it is not enough; we want *more*,—an unmistakable sign from heaven, to satisfy us. Let Him give us this, and we shall know what to think.' 'But some of them said, He casteth out devils through Beelzebub, the chief of the devils. And others, tempting him, sought of him a sign from heaven.'

These are the two phases of opinion which Jesus proceeds to deal with in the verses which follow, from the seventeenth to the thirty-second. In the verses from the seventeenth to the twenty-sixth, He disposes of the first, showing the monstrous folly and wickedness of a theory which would attribute to the agency of the devil works of mercy and healing such as this. Then, after the slight interruption described in the twenty-seventh and twenty-eighth verses, He begins in the twenty-ninth verse to deal with the second. His indignation is stirred within Him at the sight of the people crowding together to see the expected sign. For you can well understand that it would be quickly whispered from one to another;—'They have asked Him for a sign from heaven: He is going to give us a sign from heaven.' And as this whisper spread, the people would, as crowds will, press close together, each wishing to get near Him and to the front, so as to see all that was to be seen. And this is the meaning of St. Luke's words: 'When the people were gathered thick together: '—which should rather be rendered thus: 'As the people were gathering thick together.' And it was the sight of this pushing, elbowing crowd that moved the grief and indignation of Jesus, and made Him say: 'This is an evil generation: they seek a sign; and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet. For as Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation.'

Now what was this sign of Jonas the prophet, and in what

sense was Jonas a sign to the Ninevites? Turn for one moment to the third chapter of the Book which bears the name of Jonah, and see what answer it gives to these questions: 'And the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee. So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days' journey. And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown. So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything: let them not feed, nor drink water: but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not? And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not.' It is impossible to read this chapter, and to couple with it the comment of Jesus upon it in the passage before us: 'The men of Nineveh shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here;'—it is impossible, I say, to read chapter and comment together, without coming to the conclusion that the 'sign of Jonas the prophet' has nothing to do with the strange miraculous part of the Book of Jonah,—be that book history, or allegory, or whatever it be,—but must be explained

entirely out of the preaching of Jonas, and the result of that preaching. Now the preaching was the preaching of Divine judgment and wrath against sin ; and the result was repentance. The sign of 'Jonas the prophet' was not outward, or visible, or physical,—was not a portent, or prodigy, or sign from heaven, such as some of the hearers of Jesus were at that moment demanding from Him :—it was *moral*, not *material*,—it was addressed to the conscience and spirit of man, not to his outward senses. Such signs the Son of Man will give to that evil and sign-seeking generation, but no others : 'This is an evil generation : they seek a sign ; and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet.'

Thus prepared we come to the words of our text : 'No man, when he hath lighted a candle, putteth it in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they which come in may see the light.' There are two or three short proverbial or parabolical expressions which were evidently favourites with Jesus, and which are used by Him now in one connection and now in another. This first verse of our text is one of them. If you will turn back to Luke viii. 16, you will find the same short proverb or parable employed, almost word for word, in another connection, and with a different application. He has just been explaining privately to his disciples the parable of the sower : and, having explained it, he says to them, 'No man, when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel, or putteth it under a bed, but setteth it on a candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light.' Evidently, in this place, the disciples are as the lighted candle. He, by his instructions, has lighted or enlightened them ; and now they are to give out the light which He has imparted to them. They are to be as the candle, lighted and set on the candlestick, to give light to the whole household. Such is the evident meaning of the parable in this connection. But in our text the situation is entirely different, and the interpretation of the parable must be different also.

We are not told that the parable in this case was addressed solely to the twelve disciples, as it was in the other case. But it may very well have been so, and the internal evidence points strongly in that direction. Suppose, then, for clearness' sake, and in order that we may realize the whole scene vividly—but at the same time remembering that, whether our supposition be correct or not, the interpretation of the parable which we are about to give will remain the same—suppose, I say, that the twelve disciples, being close to Him, and having heard what He had just said, had then and there, or afterwards, asked Him to explain, *what*, in default of such signs from heaven as the bystanders were demanding, was the ultimate test of truth and solid ground of certainty for faith to rest upon. Suppose, I repeat, that they had asked for such an explanation,—not, of course, in the modern nineteenth century language which I have just used, but in such simple phrase as might occur to them at the moment,—would there have been anything strange or extraordinary in this? On the contrary, must not the preceding discourse have compelled all thoughtful hearers then, as it compels all thoughtful readers now, to ask such questions? Here we find the Son of Man refusing, disparaging, almost pouring contempt upon outward signs and wonders as tests of truth or evidences of his mission. We find Him appealing to the sign of the prophet Jonas,—a sign addressed, as we have seen, not to the outward senses, but to the conscience and spirit,—as the only sign which He can give to that evil generation. Was it possible *then*—is it possible *now*—to leave the matter so? Must we not ask, as the disciples seem to me to have asked, for further light upon it? And do not the words of our text give the light for which we would ask?

By a strange oversight our translators, after carefully and correctly preserving the distinction between the 'candle' and the 'light' in the thirty-third verse, have entirely neglected this distinction in the thirty-fourth verse, and by so doing have made the whole passage even more difficult than it really is.

It *should* be, *not*, 'The *light* of the body is the eye,' *but*, 'The *candle* of the body is the eye.' The eye, Jesus says, is to the body, what the candle, set on the candlestick, is to the household. If it is 'single'—that is, if it is sound and healthy—then the whole body is full of light; if it is 'evil'—that is, if it is diseased and morbid—then the whole body is correspondingly full of darkness, or in the dark. Just as *man* lights his candle, puts it on the candlestick, and sets it to give light in the house, so God has lighted this marvellous candle, the *eye*, has set it in its place in the body, and has thus provided the body with an organ for receiving and utilizing the light of day. The whole question of light or darkness for the body turns upon the condition, whether healthy or diseased, of this little delicate organ, the eye. If healthy, *then* the whole body has all the light which it needs for all the functions which it has to discharge. If diseased, though the sun be shining brightly, and there be light all round, yet the body is in darkness—partial darkness or total, according to the quantity of the eye's disease.

It is evident, on the face of it, that our text has preserved our Lord's words in a very imperfect and fragmentary state. We have to piece the precious fragments together as best we can, until they suggest the Divine meaning that is in them. Could we only have been present at that conversation, all would be clear. Even as it is, we can hardly be in doubt how to interpret this second parable, which is thus founded upon the first, even though we have only the words of the thirty-fifth verse, 'Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness,' to suggest what the interpretation must be.

For you see how the discourse of our Lord mounts up, from the candle which a man lights and puts on the candlestick to give light to the house, to the candle of the body, the eye, which God has lighted and set in its place to give light to the body; and from *this*, again, to *what*? Why, surely, to that candle of which the wise king writes, 'The spirit of man

is the candle of the Lord.' Our Lord's discourse rises, I say, by gradual ascent from the material candle to the eye, that most wonderful and delicate organ of vision ; and then, again, from this to the spiritual organ, which is to the soul what the eye is to the body—the organ by which the *soul* receives and utilizes the Divine Light, just as the eye is the organ by which the *body* receives and utilizes the light of heaven. Call it reason, conscience, moral sense, what you will,—it is the candle of the Lord and the eye of the soul. It is another of God's candles, which He has lighted for the use of man—for the use of his soul, as the eye is for the use of his body.

I said that the words of the thirty-fifth verse—'Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness'—were all that we had to guide us into the highest and truest interpretation of this parable of the candle and the light. But it must not be overlooked, that in the mere words 'single' and 'evil,'—'When thine eye is single,' 'When thine eye is evil,'—we have also a hint which evidently points in the same direction. The word which we render 'single' is a word which is frequently transferred to those noble qualities, at once moral and intellectual, which we describe by the words 'frankness,' 'sincerity,' 'candour.' The eye of the soul must be '*single*;' there must be frankness, candour, sincerity, openness to conviction, readiness to receive light from any quarter ; if the whole soul is to be full of light, having no part dark. It may be far otherwise. The eye of the soul may be, *not* single, *but* evil—*morally diseased*. When that is so, and in proportion as that is so, darkness, not light, will possess the soul. It will be with the soul, as it is with the body, when the sight is gone, and the eye is blind, and the whole body is full of darkness.

Now we all know, that, when the eye of the body is sound,—when it is properly sensitive to light, so that, whenever there is light, you can *see*,—you never think of proving that the light is light. If, when the sun was shining, some one denied that it was shining, you would only conclude that he was totally blind.

In other words, light proves itself to be light by simply giving

us light,—by enabling us to see, where we are, and what is round us, so that we can move and act. GIVEN, *light* and the *seeing eye*, and, in the outer world of sense, you have at once *certainty*. The two are so fitted to one another, that, the moment they meet, it is impossible to doubt that *this is here*, and *that is so*; and you can move freely and act without hesitation. Just in the same way Jesus intimates, that the truth which He comes to proclaim is like light; and, like light, carries its own evidence with it. Therefore He says, ‘I am the light of the world.’ Only let the eye of the soul be single, and when this Divine light and the single eye meet together, there is again in this inner world, as in that outer world of sense, *certainty*. When you are in the light, you know that you are in the light; provided only that the eye, whether of soul or body, be *not* ‘evil,’ *but* ‘single.’

He might well say, therefore, to his disciples *then*, and to *us* now, ‘Take heed;’ ‘Examine thyself, and see whether the light that is in thee be, or be not, darkness.’ *Revelation is light*. The revelation of God in Jesus Christ is light to the soul; is as truly light to the soul, as the shining of the sun is light to the body. But without the seeing eye the light is as darkness. And this seeing eye who shall give us? The candle has indeed been lighted in us by God Himself; but we need at all times a Divine hand to trim and purify the flame. Nay, we are often as the blind man in the Gospels, and must cry—‘Lord, that I may receive my sight.’

I would venture to pursue our subject yet a little further still, beyond what our Lord’s words actually suggest, with one or two remarks, which, while somewhat limiting its range, will give it greater definiteness and more distinct practical application.

I said that, in the outer world of sense, *given* light and the seeing eye, and you have *certainty*. Now this certainty is absolute only within fixed limits. I am certain that the light is light, and that I can see this and that; and this is all that I want for *action*. But if I go on to inquire into the exact nature of light itself, what it is, and how it is propagated from the sun to the earth; or if I go on to inquire into the exact nature of



that wonderful piece of mechanism, the eye, and how it is that it and the light so co-operate together that I can *see*; I am speedily lost in a boundless field of mystery, speculation, and at last mere conjecture. That little word, which is but a single letter, 'I,' is enough of itself to puzzle us. And so it is also in that highest region of all, where the light of Divine truth and the eye of the soul meet together, and we *see* and *believe*. Here, too, the certainty is absolute only within fixed limits. We may know, if we will, for certain, that we are in the light, and that we see this and that; and thus we have all that we want for action. But if we go on to inquire into the exact nature of Him whose light it is; and *how*, exactly, that light is propagated from heaven to earth by the incarnation of the Divine word; and *what*, precisely, that eye of the soul is by which we see the light and rejoice in it; then we are speedily lost in heights and depths which are too vast for us. 'Thy word,' the Psalmist said, 'is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.' And it is the same still, *after* the cross, as before it; only the lamp is brighter, and the light steadier. It is still a lamp to the *feet*, and a light to the *path*.

Yes, and let us use it so; and then the eye of the soul will become clearer and stronger day by day, and we shall be increasingly conscious that we are in the light. Jesus directs our whole attention to this point. *Not* by outward signs, *but* by inward witnessing of the light, received into us through a conscience ever exercising itself to be void of offence both towards God and towards men, and proved to be light by its power of illuminating; it is thus, and only thus, that the full assurance of faith can be ours. Only let us strive to walk as children of light,—to live our lives as those who have God for their Father, and Jesus Christ for their Lord, and all men for their brethren,—and doubt and unbelief will flee away. And this, surely, is that which St. John describes as 'the witness in ourselves,' and St. Peter as 'the dawning of the day and the rising of the day-star in our hearts.'

## SERMON XXXIV.

## THE WITNESS AND POWER OF THE CROSS.

I CORINTHIANS ii. 2.

I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ,  
and him crucified.

ST. PAUL is describing in these and the adjoining words his first arrival at Corinth, and the plans and intentions with which he came. The entire passage which we ought to have before us, in order to enter with interest and advantage upon the study of our text, is the following: 'And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.'

To fully appreciate the account which St. Paul here gives of his first arrival at Corinth and of his ministry there, we must turn to the history of the thing, as we have it in the seventeenth and eighteenth chapters of the Acts of the Apostles. From the history we learn that St. Paul came straight from Athens to Corinth; from *Athens*, the university of the world, the centre

of culture and philosophy ; to *Corinth*, a great business town, a centre of trade and commerce. The history gives us also a most remarkable and deeply interesting account of the nature of St. Paul's ministry at Athens ; how his spirit was stirred within him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry ; how he disputed in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the proselytes, and in the market daily with them that met with him ; how he encountered the representatives of the leading schools of philosophy of the time ; and how, at last, an opportunity was afforded him of giving in the most public manner an answer to the question, ' May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is ? For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears : we would know therefore what these things mean.'

Into St. Paul's reply—his broad and massive reply—to this question we must not enter now. It is sufficient for our present purpose to note the close of it. It ended,—whether purposely on St. Paul's part, or because he was not allowed to proceed any further,—it ended with an appeal to the resurrection of Jesus, as guarantee of the truth of that new doctrine which he was there to proclaim. St. Luke reports the closing sentences of Paul's oration, or at least the purport of them, thus : ' The times of this ignorance God overlooked : but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent : because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained ; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.' Whereupon followed what St. Luke describes thus : ' And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked : and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter.'

Nothing more is told us by St. Luke about Paul's ministry at Athens, beyond the fact that ' certain men clave unto him and believed ;'—' certain men,' that is, as we should say, ' a few people,' among whom are specially mentioned two,

'Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris.' Apparently the ministry at Athens was not a successful ministry. Evidently St. Paul felt that Athens was not a good field for the operations of a Christian Evangelist. At any rate he quitted the place very soon after the events which St. Luke describes, and passed on to Corinth. I think we may venture to say, that *part* at least of his experience at Athens was embodied in the resolution of our text: 'I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.'

And so to Corinth he came. His ministry there is described by St. Luke thus: 'He reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks. And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ. And when they opposed themselves and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles. And he departed thence, and entered into a certain man's house, named Justus, one that worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue. And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed, and were baptized. Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace; for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee; for I have much people in this city. And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.'

Such, as I understand them, are the facts of the case, as we learn them from the Acts of the Apostles. I think we may venture to summarize these facts thus: The ministry at Athens was an unsuccessful ministry; the ministry at Corinth was a successful ministry. At Athens St. Paul appealed specially to the resurrection of Jesus; at Corinth he appealed specially to the cross. Of course it does not follow necessarily that there

was any connection of cause and effect between these two sets of facts: that the ministry at Athens was unsuccessful, *because* the appeal was made specially to the resurrection; that the ministry at Corinth was successful, *because* the appeal was made specially to the cross. We should be very poor reasoners indeed, if we could argue so. The appeal to the resurrection did not exclude the preaching of the cross; neither did the appeal to the cross exclude the firm assertion of the resurrection. Nor is there anything to show, that St. Paul was not perfectly right in laying the stress of his preaching at *Athens* upon the resurrection, at *Corinth* upon the cross. The places were so different in every way, that a line of thought and argument which suited and was best in the one, might be anything but suitable, anything but good or successful, in the other. And St. Paul had such a wonderful faculty of feeling the pulse of his hearers, such an intense sympathy with them, such an intuitive insight into their ways of thinking and feeling, that we can perfectly trust him to have seized at cultivated, philosophic Athens, as at barbarous Lystra, just that line of argument which was most likely to prove successful with the immediate hearers.

Still the broad fact remains. The ministry at Athens, with its appeal to the resurrection, was upon the whole unsuccessful; the ministry at Corinth, with its appeal to the cross, was upon the whole successful: and for some reason or other, which we can only guess at, because St. Paul himself has not explained it, on his way from Athens to Corinth, and as a result apparently of his experience at Athens, he made up his mind to let the stress of his preaching at Corinth rest upon the cross. 'I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.'

And yet he knew right well the difficulties that were involved in this preaching of the cross. What does he say about it in the chapter which precedes our text? 'The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are

saved it is the power of God.' 'The Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.'

It seems to me, my Christian friends, that in the facts now before us we may find *that* which is full of instruction for our own time, and indeed for all times. I need not tell you, because you cannot fail to see it, that the Gospel of Christ is once more on its trial. And this is no new or strange or surprising thing. It has been so again and again, in the generations before us. It is, we may almost say, the normal state of Christianity to be on the defensive; a defensive, however, which, to be thoroughly successful, must ever be ready to become an aggressive. But this normal state, this chronic defensive, has its acute attacks, when it specially behoves all Christian people to be ready to give an answer to every man who asks them 'a reason of the hope that is in them.' And, in giving this answer, it is ever open to us to consider, whether we shall take pattern from St. Paul's ministry at Athens or from his ministry at Corinth. The two ministries, it seems to me, represent two everlasting methods of Christian defence; defence, which shall not be defensive only, but aggressive also. For we are not here to speak in bated breath of our Christian hope, as though it were a thing to be ashamed of or to be doubted about. We are here to claim the homage of men to *that* which all gathers round, and centres in, the cross and the open grave,—the dead Christ and the risen.

In my own judgment, so far as I can venture to form an opinion upon a matter so large, weighty, and solemn, the Corinthian ministry of St. Paul represents the true line of Christian defence under the peculiar circumstances of the present moment. I do not mean to say, that there is not room for the other also. Still less do I mean to deny, that that other has been urged, over and over again, with great force and cogency. But still it will remain true, that, if we make the

resurrection of Jesus the key of our Christian position, we reduce it to a question of *evidence*,—of evidence, which only a few minds are competent to test and weigh. ‘The complication of probabilities,’ to use an admirable expression of Paley’s, upon which the Christian advocate must rely if he takes the Athenian ministry as his model, is so vast, so manifold, so multitudinous, as to be quite beyond the grasp of the intelligence of most people. They have neither the necessary time, nor the needful previous information, to pursue such wide trains of thought, with anything approaching to real mental independence. They have to accept the result, just as most of us have to accept the results of scientific discovery, on *authority*,—the authority of those who are better and wiser than themselves. Now this is *not* satisfactory; specially in a time of shaking of old beliefs, like the present. This is *not* to give ‘a reason of the hope that is in us,’ if it only comes to *this*, that we believe, *because* certain good and able and learned men tell us that we are quite justified in believing.

For, after all, this Athenian method can never carry us much beyond *this* point—that we are *justified* in believing. When, for instance, it is said, as it has been said quite recently, ‘This concession, that the miraculous is not absolutely incredible, I must claim on the one hand from those who accompany me in the present inquiry. But on the other I concede, of course, most willingly, that unusually strong and weighty proof may well be required, where the facts to be alleged are so unusual;’—when *this* is said, it becomes plain at once, that all that can be expected from such an inquiry is that the balance of evidence shall incline to the Christian side; that, to the last, there will be something to be said on the other side of the question. And this is true, not only when inquiry is being made into the evidence for the miraculous facts that are bound up with our Christian faith, more particularly into that which, on this view, is the keystone of the whole arch, namely, the resurrection of Jesus; but also when inquiry is being made into the evidence

for facts which are not in the least degree miraculous—for example, the authorship of the fourth Gospel. On carefully weighing the evidence, we may come to the conclusion that the author of it was indeed John, the son of Zebedee, the beloved disciple of Jesus. But, even after coming to this conclusion, we cannot deny, that there is something, perhaps much, to be said for the opposite conclusion, which denies his authorship; and that this opposite conclusion might possibly turn out to be true. And thus, even after the best and ablest review of all the evidence, the mind remains to a certain extent bewildered, and the will puzzled—*justified* in believing, certainly, but not *constrained* to believe. Now this may serve the purpose of a *stationary* Christianity; but it lacks the leverage, the momentum, demanded by a Christianity, which would be, as Christianity ought ever to be, diffusive, progressive, propagandist—not merely intrenched, but attacking—in one word, *missionary*.

Now let us turn our attention to what I venture to call St. Paul's Corinthian method, the characteristic of which is that it leans upon the cross: 'I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.' This has sometimes been understood as though St. Paul intended by the words, 'Jesus Christ, and him crucified,' to express, or to sanction, some special theory of the nature of our Lord's atonement. Nothing could well be further from the Apostle's intention. His thought is much simpler, and therefore much mightier, than this. He is thinking of the cross here, as he was thinking of it when he wrote a little while afterwards to another Church, 'God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.' He is thinking of it as, what he calls it in the preceding chapter, 'the power of God,'—that power of God, which had subdued his own heart, and which was capable, he felt sure, of subduing all other hearts as it had subdued his own. That cross, which was folly to the Greek,



and a stumbling-block to the Jew, he was determined to preach, and to preach in the barest simplicity, because he believed, that, so preached, it would win and convert the world. As Jesus Himself said, 'I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.'

I would fain, before I conclude, draw out some little fragment of the power and glory of the cross of Christ, in order that we may all see and feel a little of what St. Paul saw and felt, when he wrote, 'I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.' Observe then, first of all, that, by adopting this method, we are released from all that weighing of evidences, which, as I have tried to show you, is possible only for a few, and which lands us at the best in a conclusion, which, to say the least, is not wholly satisfactory. No one doubts that Jesus was crucified. No one doubts that such deliverances as these are eminently characteristic of his teaching: 'Take up the cross and follow me:' 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me:' 'Whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: and whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all: for even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.' We might multiply such passages almost to any extent. It is as certain as anything can be, not only that Jesus was Himself crucified, but that He recommended—most earnestly recommended—what we can only describe as 'the way of the cross' to his followers, entreating them to walk in it, assuring them that they would find it the way of peace and the way of life. And what the cross was to *Him*—and what He meant by this way of the cross which He charged upon his followers—was ever one and the same thing—life lived *to* God and *for* man; obedience to the Father's will to any extremity, even to the extremity of death, and that death the painful, ignominious death of the cross. 'The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister:' 'The Son of

Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost : ' He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.'

Now, at this point of the cross, the Gospel of Christ CAN be *tested*—tested by *experience*—by *personal* experience. We can *all* test it, if we will. Nay, more, we are bound to test it, and to make our report upon it. We are not really Christians, if we fail to do so. Have we ever tried to live our lives upon truly Christian principles,—upon what we may call the great cardinal principle of the cross? Have we ever honestly and earnestly tried to live our lives so, without being made to feel that so to live was life indeed; and that, if peace was anywhere to be found in this troublesome world, it was to be found here and thus? Has He, or has He not, made good to us his own promise, 'Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, and ye shall find rest unto your souls'?

Christ Himself lived on earth the truest, highest, noblest life that we can form any conception of. He created a new ideal of life; lived it Himself; and bequeathed it to us. If we do as He bids us do—if we try to take up our cross and follow Him, and in proportion as we are enabled to do so—we enter, as a matter of positive experience, into that peace, of which He said, 'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you.' Here is a reason of the hope which is in him, which any man may have at his command, if he will; which needs no learning, no skill in weighing evidence; which is in reach of young and old, learned and unlearned, rich and poor alike. All, if they will, may have this witness in themselves. To all, this day may dawn, and this day-star arise in their hearts.

Nor will it escape your notice, that in this Corinthian method is found, what is not to be found in the Athenian, that leverage, that momentum, which is needed to convert a stationary Christianity into an aggressive Christianity; to transform a Church, dormant and settled on its lees, into a Church truly militant and missionary; to give it the impulse and the courage to issue

from its intrenchments and to go forth conquering and to conquer. Every one who has really come under the power of the cross, becomes of necessity a missionary of the cross. He cannot but wish to make others partakers of the same elevation, the same peace, the same joy in believing. I know well what I am saying, in saying this. I know well, how humbling, how saddening the experience of life often is ; how easy it is to miss the mark, and to fall far below the level of our own true standard and confessed ideal. But these sorrowful experiences of failure and short-coming only serve to deepen the conviction, which every year makes deeper, that the cross is the one way of life and peace ; and that, if we would but take up the cross and follow Jesus, it would be well with us. Those very perturbations, due as they are to the sinister counter-attraction of the world or the flesh or the devil—those very aberrations from our true spiritual orbit round the one central Light and Life, accompanied as they ever are by inward unrest and forfeiture of peace—prove only too painfully and forcibly, by their results, what the true orbit for us is.

Yes ; and I will even venture to do for this Christianity, of which the cross is the soul and life, what the great heathen philosopher proposed to do for righteousness ;—strip it bare of every extraneous adjunct and support, and leave it to commend itself to us by its own inherent glory, and *that* alone. What if in that dark hour of closing life which precedes the dawn, it should seem to one, who has really tried to live his life in the spirit of the cross, that he has been living all along in a delusion ; that Christ never really rose from the grave ; and that the hope of a blessed immortality is the vainest of dreams ? What then ? He may still say to himself, that the serenity and elevation of his life have been no delusion, but a felt certainty. He may still say to himself, that, as a matter of unquestionable fact, *those* have done most for the welfare and the happiness of their fellow-men—admitting this world only into the field of view—who have lived most thoroughly in the spirit of the

cross. He may still, therefore, reasonably come to the conclusion, that, if life had to be lived over again, and if he had once more to choose—as all *do* practically choose—whether he would live it in the spirit of the cross, or on the principle, ‘Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die,’ he would choose again, as he chose years ago, not the world’s service, but Christ’s.

And now, having tested the matter by this extreme test, I will leave it to you to restore in imagination the true picture of the future. I will leave it to you to conceive what it will be to the true servant of the cross, when the veil is at last drawn, and he hears the voice of the Crucified saying to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant ; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.’

## SERMON XXXV.

## CONFIRMATION.

## I KINGS XX. II.

And the king of Israel answered and said, Tell him, Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off.

SUCH was the reply of Ahab, king of Israel, to the vain-glorious boast of Benhadad, king of Syria: 'The gods do so unto me, and more also, if the dust of Samaria shall suffice for handfuls for all the people that follow me.' 'Tell him,' Ahab said, 'Let not him that girdeth on his harness'—that is, his armour—'boast himself as he that putteth it off.' And the result, as you will see from the history, was, that Benhadad suffered two disgraceful and disastrous defeats, and was compelled to sue for mercy from the king whom he had so insolently challenged.

Ahab's reply, however, was simply a *proverb*—a homely, pithy proverb of the day, admitting of a thousand applications. As a proverb I propose to use it this evening,—as a motto for a sermon, in which my thoughts will wander far away from those old kings of Syria and Israel, and will deal with things close at hand,—matters, which most nearly concern our own selves. More particularly I have in my mind the approaching Confirmation, and the young people who will then 'in the presence of God and of the congregation, renew the soleinn promise

and vow that was made in their name at their baptism ; ratifying and confirming the same in their own persons, and acknowledging themselves bound to believe and to do all those things which their godfathers and godmothers then undertook for them.'

Last Sunday evening, you may remember, I was speaking about the retrospect and review of life—such retrospect and review as we shall all one day have to pass upon our own lives, for sorrow or for joy, for bitter remorse or penitent contrition or grateful adoration, as the case may be. This evening I propose to shift our point of view from the termination of life to its commencement. It is a prospect, not a retrospect—a foreview or anticipation, not a review—that I invite you to. I have before my mind, first of all, these young people who are just entering upon life, and who will pledge themselves here, so soon, outwardly and visibly, by their own word and deed, to fight the good fight bravely and manfully under Christ's banner, the cross, against sin, the world, and the devil, and to continue his faithful soldiers and servants unto their lives' end. And I have before my mind, also, all those, to whom, humanly speaking, life is still more a thing of the future than of the past ; who are still looking forward hopefully and buoyantly to its uncertainties, its possibilities, and even to its struggles and its difficulties. To all these I should like very much, God helping me, to say a word in season to-night.

1. First of all, then, let me remind them that they are girding on their harness, and that they will do well therefore to bear in mind the proverb of our text, ' Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off.'

There is a certain self-confidence, which is natural to youth, and which sits not ungracefully upon it. It has been cleverly said, that 'conceit is a young man's capital.' A young man has to learn by actual trial what he *can* do, and what he *cannot* do ; and he requires a certain amount of self-confidence to give him the necessary courage to experiment with his untried

powers, until he knows what direction they must take. As Carlyle says, in his quaint forcible way, 'The painfullest feeling is that of your own feebleness : ever, as Milton says, to be weak is the true misery. And yet of your strength there is and can be no clear feeling, save by what you have prospered in, by what you have done. Between vague wavering capability and fixed indubitable performance, what a difference ! A certain inarticulate self-consciousness dwells dimly in us ; which only our works can render articulate and decisively discernible. Our works are the mirror wherein the spirit first sees its natural lineaments. Hence, too, the folly of that impossible precept, *Know thyself* ; till it be translated into this partially possible one, *Know what thou canst work at.*'

For the same reason, youth is the time of *criticism*. We all know, how unsparingly, how unmercifully, the young criticize the proceedings of their elders. The excuse for it is, that they are trying to see or feel their way to action ; and they have a keen eye, therefore, and a sharp tongue, for the actions of those around them, upon whom the weight of the world's work is for the time being falling. As they get under the yoke themselves, this criticizing, censorious temper will leave them. I am often reminded of a witty sentence, which occurs in one of the works of our present Prime Minister : 'You know who the critics are ? They are those who have *failed* in art or literature.' The critical temper, when it becomes the habitual temper of the mind, is generally a mark of failure. Those who succeed in life, know the difficulties of success too well to be harsh in their judgment of others. But in the young, the critical temper is often a prelude to success. It often marks a high standard of excellence, and a quick perception of failure to reach it. And when these are brought to bear upon the critic's own life, they will prompt him to strain after such a high standard for himself, and to be dissatisfied, until he has reached it.

At present, you will see, I am taking a very mundane view of the matter in hand. I prefer starting from this comparatively

lower level of homely good sense and common experience of life. A certain amount of self-confidence and of criticism is natural to youth—is, in some ways, an advantage to youth. I do not bid our young people present here to-night at once eschew them, as things positively mischievous and sinful. But I give them fair warning, that life will inevitably, by many a hard rap, knock the conceit out of them; and that, if they ever achieve the success which they desire, they will certainly cease to be critical. Meanwhile let me beg them to ponder the proverb, 'Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off.'

2. And now, in order to help you to cut up by the roots all those proud and boastful and vain-glorious thoughts, which may possibly haunt you in the fore-view of life, let me point out to your notice, and commend to your reflection, one or two matters, the accuracy and truth of which you may easily verify for yourselves. One of the great poets of Greece has a saying, which I have quoted before in this place. It is to the effect, that the reverses of life are sometimes so terrible, that it is impossible to pronounce upon any life, in the way of estimate of its happiness or its misery, until the end is reached. History, both sacred and profane, enforces this lesson with a thousand examples testifying to its truth. Even the noblest lives are often crossed and barred with bands of shadow, nay, of darkness. Think of Abraham; think of David; each falling, in a moment of weakness and temptation, to a point of shame and infamy, in which the true self was lost in the false. Even the glorious career of St. Paul is dashed, for a moment at least, by his sharp contention with Barnabas. And when we pass from the pages of the Bible to the pages of common history, or to our own experience of life, it may well exclude all boasting to mark, how hard the actors in life's busy and varied scene have ever found, and do still find, it to maintain a uniformly lofty level of thought and speech and action. The moment we begin to read history with eyes opened by some knowledge of human character, and



some sympathy with human nature, it becomes almost painfully interesting, through the revelations which it makes to us, of the ease with which even great and good men may go wrong,—of the difficulty of going always and uniformly right. Think of the great Frenchman, Bossuet ; of our own great Englishman, Bacon. When such men go wrong, men so gifted and so good, we may well tremble for ourselves. ‘ Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.’ Or, in the homely language of our text, ‘ Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off.’

And there is another thing about life, which may well exclude all anticipatory boasting, and sober and subdue even the most buoyant and self-confident heart. Some of us, who are getting on in life, know what it is, perhaps, to come across letters of twenty or thirty or forty years ago, written by ourselves, or by dear friends and relatives, at a time when our own lives were entirely unformed, and when what was *then* our FUTURE was, in anticipation, as little like as it could well be to what has *since* become our PAST. Each stage of life shades, as a general rule, by such imperceptible degrees into the next stage, that it needs an experience of this kind to bring home to our minds the strange uncertainty and the curious waywardness of the future, which lies before the young. The Prophet’s words, ‘ I will lead them in paths that they have not known,’ are a very true picture of each individual life.

‘ How few, who, from their youthful day,  
Look on to what their life may be ;  
Painting the visions of the way  
In colours soft and bright and free :  
How few, who to such paths have brought  
The hopes and dreams of early thought !  
For God, through ways they have not known,  
Will lead his own.’

Now this thought, if duly weighed and pondered by the young, can scarcely fail to bear fruit in a serious, temperate,

unboastful anticipation of the coming life. The heart may still beat high with hope; but the hope will be tempered and restrained by a wholesome subduing awe.

3. I would fain lift your thoughts now to a still higher level. Very different views may be taken, and as a matter of fact are taken, upon the subject of the ordinance of confirmation. We all know, that it is *not* a sacrament, *not* an ordinance of Christ's own appointment, *but*, simply, an ecclesiastical ordinance; and, as such, one that must justify itself by actual trial. Does it *do* this?

Speaking from my own experience as a clergyman, I should say, that, beyond all doubt or question, it *does*. I am sure I could appeal to the experience of many who are present here to-night; who, if asked, would frankly answer, that their first impressions for good came to them through their confirmation; that they date the beginning of a more thoughtful and serious life from their preparation for confirmation, and from their confirmation itself.

This undoubted '*good*' of confirmation will be differently accounted for, according to people's different views of such matters. Some will account for it by a theory of sacramental or quasi-sacramental grace; others will account for it as an answer to diligent prayer; others, as the result of good resolutions, carefully framed and boldly expressed. I must excuse myself from discussing all or any of these explanations. The line of thought which I am pursuing to-night, under the guidance of the motto which I have taken as my text, must serve as my excuse.

For to-night I am asking you, in the interest of the young, to consider the initial principles, which they ought to take with them into the conduct of life. And I value confirmation for *this*, more than for anything else, that it explains so clearly what those principles are, and brings them home to us so forcibly. It should never be forgotten, that confirmation loses the greatest part of its meaning, if it is postponed until late on

in life. It was intended to meet the young at the very threshold of adult life; just when the first 'years of discretion' were beginning to come, freighted with many an anxious thought, to them. And whenever in after years such thoughts come to us, it is well for us to go back to our confirmation, and to welcome its deep yet simple teaching upon the great ruling principles of the conduct of life.

I find it exceedingly convenient, year after year, in the instruction of candidates for confirmation, to lay much stress upon those passages in the Old Testament in which we find use made of the sign of imposition of hands. Its use in the oldest times serves to show, how natural and reasonable a sign it is. If Jacob used it, as he did, when he would claim his grandsons, Ephraim and Manasseh, the sons of his favourite son Joseph, as *his own sons*, and would lay a father's last blessing upon them; if Moses used it, as he did, when he would consecrate Joshua to a life-long task as his own successor in the work of ruling and shepherding the children of Israel; *this* shows how natural the sign is, as a sign of owning, of blessing, of consecrating to work. And when we take these meanings of the sign, thus authenticated by the usage of Holy Scripture, to our ecclesiastical ordinance of confirmation, that ordinance at once starts into light and life to us, and we see, as perhaps we had never seen before, its extreme beauty, propriety, significance, and force.

Again and again we ask ourselves, not merely at the outset of mature life, but in its onward course, 'What am I to God? What am I to the world of men around me?' Let us think for a moment what solid and direct answers the ordinance of confirmation returns to these momentous questions.

Consider what it is that will take place here on Tuesday next. The central act of the whole service is thus directed by the Rubric: 'Then all of them in order kneeling before the Bishop, he shall lay his hand upon the head of every one severally, saying, Defend, O Lord, this thy child with thy

heavenly grace, that he may continue thine for ever ; and daily increase in thy holy Spirit more and more, until he come to thy everlasting kingdom. Amen.'

The true title of the Bishop, I need hardly remind *you*, is 'Father in God.' As a 'Father in God,' that is, a Father under God, he lays 'his hand upon the head of every one severally,' with the prayer, 'Defend, O Lord, this thy child.' What does this mean? It means that he claims each, in God's name, for God, as the child of God ; that he consecrates each, still in God's name, to the work which God has given, or shall give, him to do,—to the place which God has called, or shall call, him to fill.

And so, in after years, when we ask ourselves, 'What am I to God? What am I to the world of men around me?'—our answer, if we will but think of our confirmation and its meaning, is ready at once: 'I am the child of God ; I am a member of the one great household and family of God ; I have a work to do in the world for God, a place to fill, to *his* glory, and to the good of my fellow-men, who are all co-members with me in the same great world-wide and time-wide family and household.' Time-wide and world-wide, do I say? Nay, rather eternity itself is the true measure of this universal family of God, whose sacred bond death itself is powerless to dissolve.

The older we grow, the more thankfully do we accept and embrace these simple truths. The prayer of the Confirmation Service—'Let thy fatherly hand, we beseech thee, ever be over them: let thy holy Spirit ever be with them'—seems to include every prayer that we can wish to pray, either for ourselves, or for those whom we love. To know and feel that God's fatherly hand is over us and ours, to bless, to guide, to chastise, but ever in truest fatherliness ; to know and feel that his holy Spirit is with us and ours, to put the true filial temper into our hearts here and now, in order that we may be prepared for glory hereafter ; what more can we ask or want? True, we know not what the morrow may bring forth. True, we seldom

see more than a single step in advance. What of *that*? Assured of the Divine fatherliness and of the presence of his holy Spirit, we can *trust*, trust for all the rest, trust ourselves and our loved ones to *Him*.

Time and sorrow teach us the value of these simple truths, as nothing else can. I have no need to commend them to the older ones amongst us to-night. They know, by personal experience, their preciousness and their power. I beg them to join with me, as opportunity offers, in commending them to the young. I entreat more particularly those who are to be confirmed this week, to write them, as with pen of iron, upon their memories. The time will come for *them*, as it has already come for many of us, when, as they wrestle with the sorrows and the sins which beset their path in life, they *must* have hold of such truths, or it will go ill with them. The Psalmist's experience will be theirs: 'I should utterly have fainted, but that I believe verily to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.'

4. More particularly I would commend to you, one and all, as our last lesson to-night, the thoughts which confirmation teaches us to associate with our work in life and our place in life. Both in the Old Testament and in the New, we find the imposition of hands closely connected with a consecration to a particular work, or office, or function. I can never bring myself to believe that *we*, the clergy, are consecrated to our high office by the imposition of hands of bishop and presbyters, in order that we may tell *you*, the laity, that *our* work is sacred, *yours* profane; *ours* holy, *yours* common; *ours* work for God, *yours* work for the world. It seems to me clear as the day, that whatever the imposition of hands means in the ordination of priests and deacons, the same in kind, if not in force and degree, must be the meaning of the imposition of the Bishop's hands in confirmation. It *must* be meant to tell us, that our work in life, whatever be its precise nature, is *sacred* work; and that we must do it, as St. Paul says, 'as to the Lord, and not to man.'

This great truth admits of a multitude of applications. I must content myself with *one*. There will be times in life, when we shall wonder *why* we are, *where* we are ; times, when we shall survey the tangled web and chain of cause and effect which brought us hither, and trace in it much more of our own unwisdom and infirmity than of Divine purpose. Sometimes such moments of weakness and self-reproach bring terrible suffering with them. We say to ourselves, 'If I had not done *this*, if I had only done *that*, how different all would be now ! How much better and happier everything would be !' By all means let the tide of self-reproach, so far as it beats against past follies and sins, have its way. And *yet*—and *yet*—for all *that*, the Fatherly hand *has* been over us ; and we came not to our present place, whatever it be, by accident. For wise and wholesome chastisement, if for no other purpose, *He*, our heavenly Father, out of pure love to our souls, has brought us where we at this moment are. *We* may have forgotten and forsaken *Him*, but *He* has never forgotten or forsaken *us*.

There is endless comfort and strength for us in *this*. However it be with us, however deep in sorrow and trouble we may have plunged ourselves by our own fault, *He* knows all, and can overrule all for our highest good. At any and every moment, even in the far country, we may arise and go to our Father, sure of his welcome. At any and every moment we may take up our lives afresh, and say, 'Hitherto, whether for chastisement or for blessing, God by his overruling providence—providence overruling for good all my own sins and follies,—has brought me. Once more I yield myself gladly into his hands ; I consecrate myself afresh and most earnestly to his service. Be it to me, whether for sorrow or for joy, according to his will. Amen.'

## SERMON XXXVI.

### THE MISSION OF JOHN THE BAPTIST.

JOHN i. 22, 23.

Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias.

**Y**ESTERDAY was the festival of St. John the Baptist. The festival has been observed from very early times in the Christian Church. Augustine, for example, mentions it frequently in his Homilies. In one of them he associates it, in his fanciful way, with the Baptist's own words, speaking of Christ: 'He must increase, but I must decrease.' 'John,' he says, 'was born to-day, and from to-day the days decrease; Christ was born on the twenty-fifth of December, and from that day the days increase.'

The festival of yesterday has suggested my subject of this evening. But, indeed, it is a subject which needs no excuse nor suggestion for the selection of it: it is always so fresh, always so full of human interest, however unworthily it be handled. We shall find it so,—full of such human interest,—I trust, to-night.

The line of thought and of inquiry which I propose to follow this evening will be guided by our text. John the Evangelist

is giving an account, at the commencement of his Gospel, of the mission and work of John the Baptist. He describes that mission broadly, first of all, as a mission of testimony,—testimony to the Light. ‘There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not the Light, but was sent to bear witness concerning the Light.’ Next, he describes the general character of that witness or testimony of the Baptist to Him who is the Light. ‘John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me. And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.’ Last of all (true to his usual method of careful illustration of every general statement), he selects for minute description one very remarkable instance of this testimony of the Baptist to the Christ. ‘This is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No. Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias. And they which were sent were of the Pharisees. And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet? John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not: he it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoes’ latchet I am not worthy to unloose.’

A careful comparison of St. John’s Gospel with the other three enables us to fix very precisely the moment of this particular testimony of the Baptist to Jesus. It came very soon



after that baptism of Jesus by John in the waters of Jordan, in which the sign was given that identified Jesus, to John's mind, as the Christ. After his baptism Jesus withdrew into the wild mountainous region to the east of the river Jordan, to encounter that special experience which we call his temptation. Forty days, we are told, were spent by Him in the solitude and seclusion of the wilderness. At the end of those forty days He returned to the scene of John's baptism, —mixed once more with the listening crowds,—and, after two or three days spent there, returned by way of Cana to Nazareth, accompanied by five of John's hearers, who afterwards became his own devoted followers and faithful disciples. The deputation which came from Jerusalem to ask the Baptist in the name of the Supreme Council of the nation, 'Who art thou?'—evidently came *after* the baptism of Jesus, and just before He emerged again from the solitude of the desert. John's answer to that deputation was given under the full impression of the solemnity of the scene, which he himself described thus: 'I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not,'—till that moment I John knew Him not, as what He was, the Christ; I knew Him as the man Jesus; I knew Him not as the Christ;—'and I knew him not; but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw and bare record that this is the Son of God.'

Now my object to-night is to trace out, if I can, that experience and consciousness of John, which made him say in answer to those who had a right to ask him in the name of the nation, 'Who art thou? what sayest thou of thyself?'—'I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord.' In order to do this correctly, we must begin by getting a firm hold of the facts of John's case. Of these one of the most important is this: John the Baptist must have

known Jesus as man, cousin, and friend, all his life, more or less; but as the Christ, or the Messiah, he did not know Him, until the moment when he baptized Him. He knew Him as a man so much better, morally, intellectually, spiritually, than himself, that, when Jesus asked for baptism at his hands, it was natural for him to reply, 'I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?'—but as the Light and the Word, as the Lamb of God and the Son of God, he did not know Him, until the Spirit descended, and the sign, by which he was to know the Christ, unmistakably designated Jesus—perhaps to John's own surprise—as such.

That he came to prepare the way of the Lord, that he came to herald the approach of One greater and mightier than himself, of One who would baptize, not with water, but with the Holy Ghost and with fire,—*this* apparently was always, from the very commencement of his ministry, a part of John's conviction and consciousness. Nor were the hopes and expectations which animated *him* merely on a level with the vulgar hopes and expectations of his cotemporaries. The coming of this great One, of whom he spoke, was to John the approach or advent of the kingdom of heaven. He was to be waited for in penitence and awe. His baptism would be a baptism of fire. His work would be of the most searching, sifting kind. It could only be compared to the winnowing of the winnower's fan, which ends by *garnering* the precious grain, while it sweeps the chaff to utter destruction; or to the woodman's work, hewing the worthless timber down with resolute axe, and consigning it unsparingly to the flames. 'Repent,' John said; and this was always the burden of his preaching: 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' 'Bring forth fruits worthy of repentance.' 'The axe is laid at the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.' 'I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy

Ghost and with fire: whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.'

If we would come to anything like a due appreciation of John the Baptist and his marvellous work, we must try to put ourselves back to the period of his earlier ministry, previous to the moment when, as we are told, Jesus came from Galilee to Jordan unto John to be baptized of him. Looking at the entire thing from a purely historical point of view and in the order of its actual development, it is certain that John the Baptist initiated the whole of that great religious movement which we call Christianity. At a time when the nation was sunk in formalism—so far as outward appearances went—under the influence of the teaching and example of the Scribes and Pharisees, he had the courage of his convictions to such an extraordinary extent as to appear in public, clothed in a dress, and preaching in a style, which suggested to all who heard and saw him, that the days of the old prophets of Israel had come back again. And he produced such an impression upon the popular mind and imagination, that at last even the religious authorities of the nation found themselves compelled to put to him, in the most formal manner, the solemn questions, 'Who art thou?' 'Art thou the Christ?' 'Art thou Elias?'—the expected precursor of the Christ. 'Art thou *the* prophet?'

We will presently consider John's answers to these various questions. But before we come to this, I want you to consider what it was that enabled John to do as he did; what it was that gave such force to his convictions, and made it possible for him to produce an impression so profound. *He wrought no miracles*, you know.' We are expressly told that 'John did no miracle.' It was not given to him to wield that great instrument for impressing others and sustaining his own faith. His influence was, purely and entirely, moral and spiritual; and it sprang, simply and solely, out of the strength of his own religious convictions. What were those convictions, then? and how had they become *his*?

We shall say, perhaps, that he was a prophet ; which, undoubtedly, he *was*.—and that, as St. Luke tells us, ‘ the word of God came ’ to him ; which, undoubtedly, it *did*. But this is only to translate one kind of language into another ; a better and truer kind certainly, because more scriptural, but still only a *language*, a way of speaking and of describing the thing, but not an analysis or explanation of the thing itself. Now we want, if we can, to understand this extraordinary fact of the appearance and the work of John the Baptist ; to understand what it was that was passing in his own mind, when he spoke those burning words which wrote themselves in letters of flame upon the minds and memories of the hearers, so that they have come down in all their incisive vigour to our own day.

He was a prophet, we say ; but in what sense a prophet ? Did he foretell future events, and claim the confidence of his hearers on the ground of the fulfilment of his predictions ? There remains no record of any such predictions of his. What he spoke of was already, even while he spoke, close at hand. ‘ The kingdom of heaven,’ he said, ‘ is at hand ; ’ literally, ‘ has come near,’ or, ‘ has drawn nigh.’ He himself felt it near ; felt it all round him ; felt its breath, as it were, upon him ; felt himself within it, under it, mastered by it. Whilst Pharisees and Scribes were practically proclaiming a God of the past, an absentee God, *he* was being made sensible of the presence of God, as the *Living* God, the righteous King and actual ruler of his creatures. And, being made sensible of this, he could not but proclaim it as the ground of a call to repentance and amendment of life. ‘ He came,’ St. Luke says, ‘ into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.’

St. Luke tells us, that, in writing his Gospel, he took all possible pains to preserve the exact order of the events which he narrates. By the help of his Gospel we are able to present to our minds a clear picture of the earliest stage in the ministry of John the Baptist, when he was still going up and down the country, moving about from place to place, everywhere


preaching repentance. It was only in this way that the movement, which he originated, could have taken root amongst his countrymen. By these earnest missionary efforts he gained such a reputation as attracted crowds of hearers to him, when he presently located himself, now at one point and now at another, in the valley of the Jordan, for the convenience of its waters in administering baptism to the many of all ranks and professions who sought it from him. *Then came another stage in his ministry.* It began to be whispered about amongst the crowds that flocked to his baptism, 'What if this should be the Christ?' For John's preaching was the embodiment of, and at the same time gave form and strength and expression to, a wide-spread indefinite spiritual uneasiness and apprehension, such as is ever the precursor of, and the Divine preparation for, great religious movements. Men's hearts were to a certain extent predisposed for John's work; so that the seed which he sowed fell in a genial soil. The old shadowy hope of the Messiah was stirring again, freshly and vigorously, in their minds, so that it was quite natural for them to muse and ask, as St. Luke tells us they were doing, 'May not this John be he?' To all which vague musing and asking John's reply was clear and precise: '*My mission is simply to baptize you with water unto repentance: but one mightier than I cometh.*' 'You are right; the Christ is near, but I am not he; nor do I yet *know* him.' *And, by-and-by, there came yet another stage in his ministry,* when, having baptized Jesus, he could say: 'There standeth one among you, whom ye know not; he it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoes' latchet I am not worthy to unloose.' 'And I knew him not:' I, too, like you, knew Him not; though now I know Him; 'but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water.'

The review of any life and life's work is always full of interest. Even such a short obituary notice as that of Lord Sandhurst in the 'Times' of yesterday, or that of the late Bishop of Newfound-

land in the 'Guardian' of last week, has a deep interest for all those who are still doing their little part in the work of the world. Much more must this be so, when the life and the work are what those of John the Baptist were. The danger then is, lest we should push him to a distance from us,—a distance, at which he can be no help or service to us,—in the belief that the reverence, which is his due as 'prophet and more than prophet' (to adopt our Lord's own description of him), requires this of us. To help us to avoid this danger, let me ask your attention for a moment to two points. When Jesus Himself, at the very close of his own ministry, was describing the nature of John's claim upon the reverence and adhesion of his cotemporaries, He described it in these words: 'John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not.' He came in the way of righteousness,—as a preacher and doer of righteousness,—*that* constituted his claim to the attention of his hearers. There was nothing exceptional in *this*, nothing that puts him necessarily and absolutely out of the plane of our own sympathies. And again, that which was most exceptional in the Divine treatment of John was surely the intimation of the sign by which he was to recognize the Messiah. It will help us to realize how little such outward signs and wonders can aid faith, if we will remember that this was just the point at which the faith of the Baptist gave way in the course of the final stage of his earthly life. We all know the pathetic story, which tells how from his prison he sent to Jesus to ask, 'Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?' He did *not* doubt the truth of his own old message, delivered again and again in the audience of listening crowds,—'One mightier than I cometh: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.' He *did* doubt the truth of *that*, which had been attested by signs supernatural to eye and ear alike, when the heaven was opened, and the Spirit visibly descended, and the voice came, which said, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'

A subject like this grows upon one in the handling of it, until it is difficult to keep it within the bounds of a sermon. We would fain find the clue to that inner consciousness and those deep convictions of the Baptist, which made him the power that he was, both to his cotemporaries and ever since. Now the words which in all the four Evangelists alike are specially associated with John the Baptist, as though they would give us just the clue which we want, are the very words from the fortieth chapter of Isaiah's book, with which he replies in our text to the question, '*Who art thou? What sayest thou of thyself?*' 'I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord.' Asked, 'Art thou the Christ?'—he replies, 'No.' Asked again, 'Art thou Elias?'—he replies again, 'No.' Asked again, 'Art thou the prophet,' the expected prophet,—that is, Jeremiah, as to whom the Jewish tradition was, that he would reappear before the Messiah came,—he replies again, 'No.' 'What then?' 'Nothing but a voice crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord; *as who may not cry, so long as the Lord's way is not straight?*'—that is, not ready, not prepared.

Now this reply, it appears to me, is very noteworthy, both in what it denies and in what it affirms. It denies that he is Elijah. And yet we have it on the highest authority, that in the Baptist were fulfilled those words of Malachi, with which the Canon of the Scriptures of the Old Testament closes: 'Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.' The denial of such high honour shows the simplicity and modesty of the man, the entire absence of all self-consciousness, vanity, and ambition, from his pure and lofty and noble nature. It was no affair of his to determine his own latitude and longitude in the chart of the world's history. *That* was for his cotemporaries to do, not for *him*. *That* was *their* responsibility, not *his*. It was for *him* not to be thinking about himself and what he might possibly be, but to do his work, to fulfil his mission, to



bear his testimony. And to himself it seemed, that the best account he could give of his own work and mission and testimony was already given to his hand in the language of an old prophet, which might do duty as a description of every true prophet's work in every age : 'I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord.'

Here, then, I find the clue that we want to the deepest thoughts of the Baptist's heart. Let me try, in a few brief concluding words, to analyze and distinguish, with a view to our own personal edification and instruction in righteousness.

1. You cannot have forgotten, how our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, being tempted in the wilderness, took up, in opposition to the tempter, *not* any special or exceptional ground such as He might claim as Messiah and Son of God, *but* common human ground, such as any poor tempted suffering mortal may stand on and be safe : 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God : '—'Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God : '—'Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.' I trace something of the same kind in the reply of the Baptist to those who were really at the moment his tempters. For was it *not* a moment of intense temptation to be interrogated in a way which made it possible for him by one false answer to surround himself with an atmosphere of boundless enthusiasm, adulation, and homage ? The language of the Evangelist reveals his profound sense of the difficulty of the situation and of the nobleness of the Baptist's demeanour in it : 'He confessed, and denied not ; but confessed, I am not the Christ.' It was so easy to equivocate, to give an ambiguous answer ; so hard to return a decisive, resolute, unhesitating, 'no.' The false prophet would have returned a very different answer. The true prophet must take up common human ground, and so be help and strength to his sinful, suffering, tempted fellow-men. 'Is the way of the Lord straight, or not ? Is every obstacle removed out of his path, every offence out of his kingdom ? If *not*, then it is *my* duty, and *yours*, to help to



make it straight. This is all that I profess or claim to do. Necessity is laid upon me, and do it I *must*.'

Dear brethren, does *this* need a single word of application? I think not. So long as anything remains to be done in the name of Christ for our fellow-men, (and oh! what a mountain of such work still remains undone); *so long* we may hear, if we will, the voice crying to *us*, 'Make straight the way of the Lord.'

2. But again,—there is a shadow of loneliness and isolation in the reply, 'I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness.' And so it must always be, when the circumstances are at all similar. John the Baptist was far in advance of his contemporaries; was at a far higher spiritual level than they. There was only *One*, who could thoroughly understand, appreciate, and sympathize with him,—*his* Master and *ours*, Jesus Christ. His life was, therefore, necessarily a lonely life. The homage of listening and admiring crowds was nothing to him, except in so far as it indicated a readiness to receive his message, and was followed by some fruit of genuine repentance. His voice, even when it ranged over the largest audience, was still to himself as the voice of one crying in the wilderness. By and by those great audiences would desert him. It would have to be said to him by his own disciples, 'Master, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him.' And *then*, just because he is the prophet that he is; just because the Word of God has truly touched and inspired his soul; just because he is, *to himself*, nothing more than the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord;—he will be able to reply, firmly, thankfully, joyfully, 'He must increase, but I must decrease.'

Dear brethren, does *this*, again, need a single word of application? Let it be *this*, then. Do not be afraid of standing alone. Work for God. And if, in working for God, loneliness and isolation be at any moment your lot, what does it matter?

If your work is the fruit of real conviction, if it is inspired by true ideas, the work will live, the ideas will triumph, will spread and propagate themselves and mould other minds,—on a small scale it may be, and in a very humble way,—until it shall be a surprise even to yourself to witness it. John's work lives even to this day. His thoughts still mould us. His character is still a power, out of which healing and invigorating virtue is ever proceeding. Could he have known the fruit of his labours as we know it, he might wave those fickle crowds contentedly away, and pass calmly from the free air of the wilderness to the stifling atmosphere of a prison, and from his prison to the executioner's sword, conscious of a life's work well done.

3. And, once more, there is a feeling of hope and joy in the reply, as well as a shadow of loneliness and isolation. John the Baptist could not forget, any more than we can, that the words which he selected to describe his work are imbedded in a passage of which this is the opening strain: 'Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saith your God.' True prophet and earnest worker for God that he was, he could not but find *joy* in his work, for the work's own sake, as well as *sorrow*. For it is the very nature of such work to bring both joy and sorrow. And, besides this, he knew and felt, that the movement, of which he was the herald and which it was his privilege to initiate, was fraught with untold good and blessing to his own nation and to the whole human race. His father's words, had he nothing else to go by, must have taught him this: 'And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; to give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death'—that is, to the whole Gentile world—'to guide our feet into the way of peace.'

It is so still. Whatever be the work which is given us to do, whatever be the path of duty for us, if we will but throw

ourselves heartily into the one, and tread the other firmly and diligently, hope and interest and joy are sure to spring up around us. In some way or other the work is sure to bring a multitude of wholesome human interests along with it. It is when we begin to repine and murmur,—it is when the hands hang down and the knees grow feeble,—that the joy and the interest and the hope die out of the day's work. Courage then, brethren ! 'Work your work (whatever it be) betimes ;' work it in the fear and love of Him who gave it you to do,—as to *Him*, and not to yourselves or to men,—'and in his time He will give you your reward.'

## SERMON XXXVII.

## THE UNPARDONABLE SIN.

MATTHEW xii. 32.

Whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him : but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.

FEW, if any, of the words of Jesus have given occasion to so much searching of heart as these. They have compelled the question,—asked, sometimes out of curiosity, sometimes out of a feeling much deeper than curiosity,—‘What *is* the unpardonable sin?’ And, beyond this, they have suggested to some minds, trembling on the brink of religious insanity, the further question : ‘This unpardonable sin, have *I* committed it?’

We must look, first of all, at the connection in which the words stand ; and, next, at St. Mark’s version of them ; and then we shall be prepared, I think, to discuss and apply them with advantage and profit. God help us to do so : for, indeed, the task is an arduous one.

St. Matthew is describing, in this chapter from which our text is taken, the progress of the great controversy between Jesus and the Pharisees. His description embraces three separate stages or points in the controversy. The first of these stages turns upon the use and abuse of the sabbath day ; the

second, upon the source whence Jesus drew his power to heal the sick in mind, as well as the sick in body; the third, upon the demand for a sign from heaven. The words of our text come under the second of the three. An extraordinary case of possession had been brought to Jesus; and the cure effected by Him had been radical and instantaneous. 'Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind and dumb; and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw.' Two theories were at once started as to the origin of the power, by which Jesus had achieved so great and beneficent a result. The simple-hearted unsophisticated people by whom he was surrounded at the moment asked one another, whether any but the Messiah could work such a wonder. The Pharisees, on the other hand, of whom there were many in the crowd, propounded, by way of counter-explanation, the extraordinary theory, that the evil spirit had been dispossessed by virtue of an authority and a commission derived from the very Spirit of Evil himself. 'All the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the Son of David? But when the Pharisees heard it,'—heard this popular explanation of the matter,—'they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils.' It is in the course of the reply of Jesus to this theory of the Pharisees,—in the course of his refutation of it, his exposure of its folly and its wickedness,—that we come upon the words: 'Wherefore I say unto you, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.' If we would understand the words aright, we must keep carefully in view the occasion which drew them out, and the audience to which they were addressed.

The importance of this will be more strongly felt by us, when we turn for a moment to consult St. Mark's version of

the words. You will find it in Mark iii. 28, 29: 'Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: but he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation:' upon which St. Mark adds, by way of explanation, the important comment,—'Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit.' To such straits were the Pharisees driven by their hatred of Jesus, that they were even so foolish and so wicked as to say, 'He who dispossesses the unclean spirits is himself possessed by an unclean spirit, stronger and more potent than they.' It seems a piece of almost incredible folly and wickedness on their part: yet so it was.

Now here it becomes necessary to point your attention to a question of *words*, which is really also a question of *things*. You will see, by referring to Matthew xii. 31, that two important words in the second half of the verse are printed in *italics*, to show that there is nothing answering to them in the original. Our authorized English version runs thus: 'All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men,'—the words '*against*' and '*Holy*' being printed in italics. Now these italics serve as a kind of danger-signal to the English reader, to put him upon his guard and warn him against laying too much stress upon, or attaching over much importance to, words, which are supplied by the translators, and which may, or may not, be required by the original. In this particular instance the supplied words are certainly not required. They are not a help, but a mischief, to the sense; and it is almost beyond a doubt that we ought to read the passage, not as it stands in our English Bibles, but thus, or to this effect: 'All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy of the spirit shall not be forgiven:'—the 'spirit' spoken of here being, *not* the Holy Spirit of God, *but* the human spirit of the

man himself; and 'the blasphemy of the spirit' being that blasphemy which has its seat in the spirit and will of the man, that is, in the very centre and core of his being, whence all thought and feeling and desire and volition spring and radiate. 'The blasphemy of the spirit' is, in fact, a poisoning of human nature at its very roots; such a poisoning of the spiritual nature as makes a man in effect say to evil, 'Be thou my good.'

We shall see presently, I think, how important this necessary correction of our authorized English version is, and what a light it sheds upon the meaning of Jesus. In addition to this, there is yet another question of words that deserves to be taken notice of. St. Mark has: 'He that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation.' I must not say there is *no* doubt, but I think I may safely say there is *little* doubt, that the word which the Evangelist really wrote was not the word which we translate by the English 'damnation' or 'judgment,' but was a word which must be translated into English as '*sin*.' 'He that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but will be in danger of eternal sin.' Now this, too, is important, because it helps us to see, that *that* against which Jesus aims these tremendous words of his is not some rash and hasty utterance of the lips, however wicked and blasphemous it might be, but is a state,—not an *act*, a single act; but a *state*, a settled state,—a state of the heart and spirit and will,—a state of the man himself,—a state which, once come to, could hardly fail to be permanent, everlasting, unchanged by death—unchangeable, it might even be, beyond death.

So far a questioning of the mere words will carry us towards a right understanding of the meaning of Jesus, but *no* further. And at this point it may not be amiss to compare the language in which the prophet Isaiah denounces some of the worst evils of his own time—a time, which (as we learn from our Lord's own use of Isaiah's words on another occasion) had much in common with the time portrayed in the Gospel narratives:

‘Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil ; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness ; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter.’ Isaiah’s words depict a spiritual state, in which the great immutable distinctions between good and evil, right and wrong, truth and falsehood, are utterly ignored ; and, so far as it lies in man to obliterate them, are practically obliterated. Just such a spiritual state it is that Jesus evidently dreads and deprecates for the Pharisees of his own day. They seemed to Him to be slipping and sinking down into a condition of heart and will, from which, humanly speaking, there was no retreat, no recovery, no upward struggle into light and life. How else was it conceivable that they should attribute to the agency of the spirit of evil what was so manifestly a work of unmixed good ? As the Saviour of men He must warn them, and warn them in language unmistakable, ere a result so terrible should be consummated in them.

Now this, too, is a thought which we are bound to bring with us to the consideration and final application of the words of our text. These Pharisees, too, were men ; and, as men, were dear to the Son of man, the Saviour of men. Their souls were as precious in his sight as the souls of the publicans and sinners, who crowded around Him and hung upon his lips. The more carefully we study his manner of dealing with them, the more distinctly we shall perceive how thoughtful and considerate it was. After that first collision with them on the subject of the sabbath day, and when He knew how exasperated they were against Him, He withdrew, St. Matthew tells us, as much as He could, for a time, from contact with them, for *their* sakes, doubtless, much more than for his own. He would give time for the heated feeling to cool, and for calmer counsels to prevail. With reference to *them*, too, as well as with reference to the common herd of publicans and sinners, it was true, in the language of St. Matthew’s quotation from the old prophet of Israel : ‘He shall not strive, nor cry ; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall he not break,



and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory.' The evil system, which one generation of Pharisees after another had inherited and had helped to mature, must indeed be broken through, torn to shreds, scattered to the winds; but the individual Pharisee was still a *man*, an immortal soul, spite of the inhuman system of which he was both victim and part-creator. No words could be too strong and fierce in denunciation of the system; no thought could be too tender and considerate on behalf of the individual Pharisee, at once accomplice in it and sufferer through it. Read this Saviour-feeling between the lines of the narrative, as we are bound to do; and all will become clear to us.

With such preparation of thought and feeling, we turn once more to the words of our text, which as yet our explanation has hardly touched at all: 'Whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.' In these words you will of course mark, and mark (I imagine) with surprise, the distinction drawn by Jesus between that which is spoken against the Son of man, and is therefore forgivable, and that which is spoken against the Holy Ghost, and is therefore unforgivable. The more we meditate upon it, the more surprising, I should suppose, will the distinction seem to us. We shall ask with amazement and perplexity, what the rationale of it is. Is not the *Son* as much a Person of the Ho'y Trinity as the Holy Ghost is? Why, then, should blasphemy against the Son be pardonable, whilst blasphemy against the Holy Ghost is unpardonable? What possible difference, in point of guilt and desert, can there be between the two?

I want you to ask such questions as these, because I feel sure there is an answer to them,—a most satisfactory answer,—an answer most instructive and profitable. And in trying to give that answer, so far as I am myself able to give it, I should like you to notice, first of all, the extraordinary

courage and foresight of the words: 'Whosoever speaketh against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him.' Looking at his appeal to men, purely as an intellectual affair, I know no language of his so reassuring, so convincing, as *this*. Morally and religiously, of course, the appeal contained in the words,— 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest,'—goes much further and deeper than this. But looking at the thing from a merely rational point of view, there is to my mind something quite astonishing in the serene tranquillity of the words: 'Whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him.' It is as though He were gazing up through the long avenue and vista of doubts and difficulties, hesitations and denials, which puzzle and perplex us still,—recognizing the fact, that they must come,—and looking down upon them all, from a height of assured and immeasurable superiority, as though they were the merest ripple of the waves at the foot of some tremendous cliff. Had He been anything less than what we believe Him to be, He could not have spoken so,—so calmly, so tranquilly, with such consciousness of strength. A pretender to the Messiah's throne would have spoken very differently; would have denounced in advance the doubts and denials that might seem to impeach his title or to detract from his sovereignty. *The Christ, the Messiah, the Son of man, the Son of God*, can afford to speak with sympathy of the doubts which He foresaw, in the nature of things, *must* arrive; and which had far better be spoken out, than smoulder unspoken within. He is so strong,—He is so sure of final victory,—that He can be content to wait, to invite the closest scrutiny of his claim to the throne of our hearts, and to treat with the utmost clemency and forbearance, nay, with compassion and sympathy, those who intellectually only, provided it be only intellectually, are rebels against Him. Of these, too, it is true: 'A bruised reed he shall not break, and smoking flax he shall not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory.'

Having made sure of this step, the next will be found comparatively easy to us. The difference between speaking a word against the Son of man, and speaking against the Holy Ghost, answers to the difference between doubt and sin,—between the *doubt*, which is of the intellect purely and which is involuntary, and the *sin*, which is of the will and willing, and which has so eaten into the conscience as to have actually silenced and destroyed its protest. Recall once more the circumstances of the case. Jesus is addressing those who are explaining by a theory of Satanic agency a work which was undeniably a work of healing and blessing and good. And the motive which originated this strange theory was undisguised and unmistakable. It was the wish to discredit and undermine a rival teacher. Such theorizers were already on the inclined plane which slopes down into the abyss depicted by the terrible words: 'The blasphemy of the Spirit shall not be forgiven unto men:' 'Whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.' They were on the inclined plane, I repeat, sloping down into this abyss; but it was not too late to rescue them from it, and to plant their feet again in a large and level space. The immediate object of the warning words of Jesus was thus to rescue these unhappy Pharisees from the doom into which they were unconsciously gliding. No feeling of hostility or of bitterness—forgive the suggestion of such a thought—dictated the words. They were spoken out of pure love to the souls of these sinful men, by Him who came to seek and to save that which was lost: whether Pharisee or publican, it mattered not to Him; and *who* more lost than these Pharisees,—and all the more *lost*, because they fancied themselves *found*? As He said to them Himself on a later occasion, in answer to their own question, 'Are we blind also?'—'If ye were blind, ye should have no sin; but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth.' 'Could you only be brought to acknowledge your blindness, all might yet be well with you.'

And now, in conclusion, let us briefly consider, *how*, best and most usefully, to apply the words to ourselves. And, first of all, if there be any here, as possibly there may be, whose minds have ever been haunted and troubled by dread of the unpardonable sin and fear lest they themselves may have committed it, let me point out to them, that the very fact of their entertaining such a fear is positive proof that they do not underlie at the moment the awful danger to which the words of Jesus point. For the words of Jesus, as I have tried to show you, describe, not any single sinful act, but a state,—a spiritual state,—and a state in which the seared conscience has ceased to speak. The soul which is in danger of eternal sin is the soul in which the death-like stillness is broken by not even a whisper of conscience. So long as conscience speaks at all, there is hope for us. We are still within reach of the words of promise: ‘All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.’ Therefore, let none despair. Nay, I go further, and say, Let none even *despond*. Whatever our past may have been, redemption is still within our grasp. Still it is being said to us, ‘Lay hold on eternal life.’

And, in the next place, I think we may, one and all, use the words of Jesus with great advantage, to help us to a better understanding of what is meant in Scripture language by *forgiveness*. Too often we attach to the word ‘forgiveness’ the thought, not of the actual remission of sins, but only of the remission of the penalties which attach to sin. Hence, when we read the words of our text: ‘Whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come:’—our first notion is, that there is something arbitrary, not to say vindictive, in the distinction thus drawn between what is pardonable and what is unpardonable. We fancy that what is intended is a classification of sins into those which God will forgive, and those which God will not forgive,—the distinction between the

two classes being purely one of his own creation. Such a notion as this will I hope already have been roughly shaken by what has been said to-night. In order to destroy it utterly, let me beg you to remember,—what, when stated, none will deny,—that the forgiveness spoken of in the Holy Scriptures, and promised so specially and distinctively in the gospel of Jesus Christ, is the forgiveness of *sins*, and not the mere remission of penalties attaching under the Divine government to sin; and that this forgiveness of sins is the product of two factors, one *human*, the other *Divine*. There can be no forgiveness of sins without repentance on the sinner's part: not because God is unwilling to forgive,—(ah! no; He is far more willing to forgive than we are to be forgiven,)—but because the love that would fain forgive cannot operate to effect its object without that welcome on the sinner's part, which is repentance. The forgiving love of God surrounds our souls on every side, as closely as the air and the light of day surround our bodies. But we must open our eyes, if we would see; we must inhale the air, if we would live. And even so we must draw in the forgiving love by repentance, if sin is ever to relax its hold and the love of God to be (as St. John says) 'perfected,' that is, to get its way, 'in us.' Now this relaxation of the hold of sin upon us is the very essence of the forgiveness of sin. And the true terror of the words of Jesus in our text lies in this, that He warns us that it is possible for human beings to sink down into a state, in which there is no forgiveness, because the very capacity of repentance has been wilfully lost.

The Psalmist writes: 'I will praise thee: for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.' Wonderful and fearful indeed is the bodily structure, with its exquisite mechanism, its delicate tissue of nerve and brain, its mysterious motive power of vital force, and its awful capacity of disease and pain, derangement and death. But how much more fearful and wonderful is the spiritual structure of reason and will, conscience and soul, with all its terrible capacities of disorder and deterioration, sin and eternal death!

Turn we, this night and ever, with humblest prayer, to Him in whom we live and move and have our being, and whose children we are, beseeching Him to do with us what He will, to chasten us as He will, but never, never to suffer us to sink into that sleep of the conscience, which is the sure precursor of spiritual death.

## SERMON XXXVIII.

### INFLUENCE.

PSALM cxiii. 9.

He maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children.

**S**PEAKING in the chapel of Rugby school a few days ago, on the anniversary of Dr. Arnold's death, the Dean of Westminster is reported to have used the following words: 'On the Sunday after Dr. Arnold's death (June 12, 1842), one of the lessons contained these words: "Behold, my sons are with you," and I thought, as I heard the words, of each of his fatherless actual children. I think of the words now as true of the greatest of the teachers in this place who have succeeded Arnold; for more than one of your head-masters has been the son of Arnold. I think of them as true of every young lad here, who is a truthful, generous, upright Christian boy now, and who soon will be a fearless, energetic Christian man. So far as you, one and all, are Christ's in the spirit of Arnold, so far you may one and all carry on to future days the glory of him who sleeps in the midst of this chapel, and whose memory is its best inheritance.'

These striking and beautiful words give me the clue which I want for the interpretation of my text. In the case of all the great and good, there is the descent after the flesh, which is one

thing; and there is the descent after the spirit, which is another thing. Sometimes, but by no means always, the two unite. The son catches the father's spirit, inherits the father's mind and character, prolonging and extending their influence. But often it is otherwise. The true spiritual descent lies outside the descent after the flesh altogether; or, at least, spreads far and wide beyond it. The true sons and daughters are those whose life has taken a new direction, has received a fresh and living impulse, from the words and works, the example and the character, of one, perhaps never seen in the flesh, to whom they feel that they owe all which makes life worth having,—light, insight, peace, power to do and to suffer.

We may transfer such thoughts as these to ourselves, in the way of incentive and encouragement. For what we *see* plainly enough in the case of *departed* worthies, whose names are unanimously enrolled in the ranks of the great and good, is true—though unseen, and though in a comparatively very narrow and humble field—of all those who are striving here and now to live worthy lives, or, in the language of Holy Writ, ‘to walk worthy of the Lord, who is calling them to his kingdom and glory.’ We little know the value of the forces, which we do or can set in motion day by day, for good or for evil, upon those around us; and it is well that we should know it, not only by way of warning, but also by way of comfort and wholesome stimulus.

There is in every one of us that which makes us dissatisfied and ill at ease, until all our powers and affections are called out,—are called into full exercise. I can hardly think that the Psalmist meant his words to be understood literally, or *only* literally, when, after writing thus,—‘Who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high, who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven and in the earth? He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill; that he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people;’—he added, ‘He maketh the barren



woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children.' Though he mentions only one, he must have been thinking surely of the many modes, in which the powers are called out and the affections exercised. At any rate his words turn so readily into a parable, that I shall venture to use them so. The guidance of the household, the care of children,—these are certainly the commonest ways, in which the affections and the powers of one half the human race are brought into free and full play. But there may be no house to guide, and no children to love and tend and educate ; and yet the words may be made true, 'He maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children.'

I take the words, then, as telling us, first of all, *this* :—That no powers and no affections were intended by the Giver of all to lie fallow and waste. He, from whom these, as well as all other good and perfect gifts, come, has, we may be sure, in his view also a field for their exercise,—a field, into which He is prepared, by his Providence and his Spirit, to guide the owner. There is room and need, depend upon it, for every power and every affection that the Creator has implanted in us. Now I am speaking, of course, to some this morning, who feel that they have already a very full place in the world ; who have found their niche ; and who are conscious, that all their faculties and gifts, whatever they may be, are none too great for the demands which are being made day by day upon them. I have only to look around me in this place to be reminded at once of busy lives and happy homes, which it is pure pleasure to think of. To such, in this their season of healthy natural enjoyment, arising out of the sense of powers and affections strained to their full pitch, I have only one word to say : Remember, and give thanks without ceasing to the Giver of all. Remember, who it is who makes you keep house and be a joyful mother of children, and sing your Hallelujah of gratitude with the Psalmist to Him.

But I may be speaking also to some this morning, who have

not yet found their place in the world, and who suffer from the heartache and the restlessness which come of unused faculties and dormant affections. It is to such cases as these that the words of the Psalmist should come home with a special message to rouse and comfort and invigorate. The matter is really in their own hands. They have but to look around them, and they will soon perceive, that the literal meaning of the Psalmist's words is not the only, nor in many ways the most satisfying, meaning. It will be strange if they cannot find, within the circle of their own acquaintance, more than one life which looks at the first glance very lonely, very dull, very uninviting; in which the nearest and dearest ties of husband, wife, and children have no place; and yet which on closer inspection turns out to be full of interests, full of affections, full of duties, full of good works and heavenly charities. It may be the life of some poor widow living amidst a crowd of neighbours as poor as herself, of whom she is the loved and trusted friend, counsellor, and comforter. Or it may be the life of some daughter and sister at home, who is the link between all the widely-scattered members of the old household. Or it may be the life of some poor helpless and hopeless sufferer on a sick bed, whose couch of pain is the meeting-point of many hearts, which are cheered and elevated by the sight of Christian endurance, and soothed and softened by the warm tide of Christian affection. We need add no other illustration; for my meaning will be already abundantly clear. The life of which I speak, at once so empty yet so full, so barren yet so fertile, admits of many forms,—forms masculine as well as feminine, and young as well as old. It is the privilege of the man, as well as of the woman; of the youthful, as well as of the aged.

There are some,—not amongst us this morning I dare say,—but there *are* some, who will say that, in the case of women particularly, the artificial barriers of society and the restraints of unsympathizing relatives put insuperable difficulties in the way of embarking upon any course of life, which departs in any degree

from the ordinary beaten track, and thus condemn many hearts to stagnation, and many powers and gifts to disuse. Fathers and mothers and elder relatives are certainly bound to see to it, that they do all in their power to prevent that waste and withering of faculty and affection, which come of the inability to discover or to use congenial channels. But the real difficulties which beset us, when we would make the most of our lives outside the common course of marrying and being given in marriage, come from within and not from without, from our own selves and not from friends or relatives. Those beautiful lives of which I have just been speaking, in which the childless is made to keep house and to be a joyful mother of children, grew they, do you think, to be what they are, without daily struggle and effort, and a victory over self, sternly fought for and hardly won? We covet the result; but we shrink from the needful sacrifice. We give way to the indolence and the self-pleasing, which are so natural to us; and the better things, of which we were capable and for which we were meant, elude our feeble pursuit, and vanish at last altogether from our sight.

However it may fare with us,—whether the outward fashion of our lives be cast in the most common mould or not,—two things we want, and all of us want, if we are to leave behind us sons and daughters in that highest spiritual sense of the words from which I set out. *One* is a constraining sense of the providence of God and a constant reference of ourselves and of all our affairs to Him. In that same address in the chapel of Rugby school from which I have already quoted, the speaker said: “‘There are two words,” said an old school-fellow to me years ago, “whose meaning we both learned from Dr. Arnold, *religion* and *history*.” We learned the meaning of those two words most of all from his own life, his own self. We saw that he was always trying to act as in the presence of God; that the innocent pleasures of life were to him enjoyable as coming from God; that he turned from all that was base and dishonourable, because he felt that God abhorred it.’ Nothing but this pre-

vailing consciousness of God,—consciousness, which shall be no burden, but a joy to us,—nothing but this can give that weight and dignity to our lives, through which they can become productive of the best spiritual influences over others. Thus, and thus only, as begotten of God ourselves, can we beget others after his image, in his likeness.

This constraining sense of the providence of God,—this constant reference of ourselves and of all our affairs to Him,—this is one of the two things which we all want. And the other is a quicker outgoing of heart and affection towards our fellow-men,—a keener sympathy and sense of fellowship with them. Why should any life be dull or barren, when around every life there beats an ocean of human joys and sorrows and interests, into which all are eagerly beckoned. ‘Men love us, or they need our love.’ It is our own fault, if we do not all ‘keep house.’ Put aside the veil which selfishness weaves between us and the world of human hearts around, and we may begin to enter at once into our true spiritual inheritance, and to be the ancestors of a fresh group amidst the ‘number numberless’ of the household of God. There shall those rise up in after years, our own spiritual children, who will call us blessed. And they in their turn shall become founders of new families in the one great spiritual household, until our seed shall be at last, like Abraham’s of old, as the stars of heaven, or the sand of the sea-shore. What matter, if in a few short years the memory of the first founder perish! The work lives and fructifies, in untold ways, to all future time.

## SERMON XXXIX.

DAVID.

2 SAMUEL xxiii. 1—5.

Now these be the last words of David. David the son of Jesse said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said, The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds ; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain. Although my house be not so with God ; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure : for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow.

OUR first lesson for this evening's service gives us a vivid picture of one of the last scenes in King David's eventful life. He summoned, we are told, all the officers of his court and camp, all the notables of his whole realm, to meet him in the capital city of his kingdom, Jerusalem ; and there he addressed them on the matters which lay nearest to his heart towards the close of his life,—the peaceful succession of his son Solomon to his own throne, and the erection of a magnificent temple for the worship of God. The two things went together in his mind ; and the statesman speaks in every syllable of his address, as well as the affectionate father and the pious king.

If anything could smooth the way for Solomon to ascend the throne, and enable him almost without an effort to distance all his competitors,—it was this deliberate association of him, on David's part, with the prospective glories of the temple of God.

The two Books of the Chronicles were written undoubtedly at a much later period than the Books of Samuel and the Kings which immediately precede them in our English Bibles. In the Hebrew Bible, as some of you may be aware, they belong to an entirely different volume (if one may call it so) of the sacred writings; the Books of Samuel and the Kings being classed (strange though it may sound to us) as prophetic works, whilst the Books of the Chronicles are found at the very end of the Hebrew Bible,—the last Books of the last of the three groups of Books comprised in the Hebrew Canon. So far as the life of David is concerned, you will see that the chronicler (whoever he may have been) refers for his authorities to earlier works, namely, 'the book of Samuel the seer, and the book of Nathan the prophet, and the book of Gad the seer.' And when we come to compare *his* version of David's life with the earlier version of it presented in the Books of Samuel and the Kings, we are sensible at once of a very considerable difference between the two. That dark passage in David's life, which stands out, in all its terrible blackness and atrocity and in all the awful severity of its chastisement, in the pages of the Second Book of Samuel, is entirely omitted; has left not a trace of itself in the pages of the chronicler. The worst crime that he lays to David's charge is that famous numbering of the people, which led, as he tells us, to the selection of the precise site for the future temple. Even in his narrative of this there is a difference, which suggests a wide interval of time and a changed habit of thought on matters in respect of which thought changes slowly and with effort and under external influence. In the Second Book of Samuel (xxiv. 1) we read: 'And again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah.' In

the chronicler's version of the same incident, what we read is this: 'And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel.'

I do not stay now to inquire what was the nature of the crime involved in this numbering of the people—an action which to *us*, habituated as we are to a periodical census of our population, seems so innocent, so natural, so sensible. I only refer to it now as an illustration of the fact, that the David of the chronicler's narrative is not the *actual* David; or, rather, is not the *whole* of the actual David; but is an ideal personage, all the blots and scars of his character and life carefully erased, and nothing left that could be felt to be inconsistent with the picture of the hero and darling of the nation,—and of the nation, when now all its hopes and thoughts and wishes centred upon the national worship, and upon the temple which was the great organ of it.

Very beautiful this picture is, and very true to one side of David's character. Take just by way of specimen those words which we shall be reading in church on Sunday morning next; words, which pass so readily into music as a Christian anthem; words, which breathe the very spirit of religious munificence in all ages: 'Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all:—'O Lord our God, all this store that we have prepared to build thee an house for thine holy name cometh of thine hand, and is all thine own.' Would that *we* of this congregation could always remember this; and *give*, as freely as we have *received*, to the service of God!

While marking, as we are in truth and duty bound to do, the difference between the David of the Chronicles and the David

of the Books of Samuel, I do not think that we should be right in charging the difference, as a fault, to the chronicler's account. It would have been almost impossible for him to do otherwise than as he did. He painted the picture out of the fulness of his own heart, with colours drawn from the national imagination and the national belief of his own day. Writing after the return of the exiles from Babylon,—looking back through centuries of disaster and humiliation to the glories of David's empire,—how could he help idealizing the great captain, who never knew what defeat was,—the king, who was the true shepherd of his people,—the munificent founder of the temple, and author of its stately worship? Was it for *him* to tear the veil remorselessly aside, and point to *this* blot and to *that* scar, and so dissect the character after the fashion of some critic of the modern school? Nay, if nations cannot, and may not, idealize their great men, and specially in the hour of defeat and depression and disaster, it will fare ill with them. Nor am I so very sure, that our modern habit of criticizing and dissecting the characters, whether of the remote past or of the living present,—resulting as it so often does in a general white-washing of all the rogues and black-washing of all the heroes and saints,—brings us one whit nearer the truth, or savours one bit more of sound morality. The charitable or idealizing judgment will often hit the mark, which the harsh or criticizing judgment misses.

But, in any case, there was no suppression of the truth on the chronicler's part. The Books of Samuel and the Kings and the Psalms must have been at least as familiar to *him*, as they are to us; and the utmost that he could hope for his own work was, that it might be allowed, in course of time, to take its place as a humble adjunct and auxiliary to *them*. There,—in those books,—written with pen of iron and lead on the rock for ever, stood the sorrowful tale of David's awful fall and bitter repentance. The student of human character in all ages could read and ponder it there.

We, however, have not the right, which the Jewish chronicler



had, to idealize the hero of the Jewish nation. For *us* the duty is to endeavour to form a true and sober estimate of a great man, his life and his character ; always remembering, that such an estimate of a fellow human being, whether living or dead, can only be had through insight, sympathy, charity.

I start from the undoubted fact, that David's career was a singularly successful one. The shepherd-boy raised himself to the throne of a petty kingdom ; and then, by sheer force of talent and character, made that petty kingdom a great empire. At the commencement of his reign his sovereignty was recognized only by the tribe of Judah. Gradually all the tribes came to acknowledge him as their king. With these as focus and fulcrum he fought his way outwards, until his empire extended (to use the Psalmist's language) 'from sea to sea,'—from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean Sea,—'and from the river'—the river Euphrates—'unto (what was to the Hebrew mind) the ends of the earth.' To accomplish all this was a great feat—a feat, which sets him at once on a level with the conquerors and emperors of the world, whatever *that* may be worth. To accomplish it so thoroughly, that the effects of his work lasted undisturbed through the long and peaceful reign of his son and successor, Solomon, was a still greater feat. The whole thing fell to pieces, we know, in the troublous time, which followed on Solomon's death, and which saw the once united tribes or states split up into two rival and even hostile kingdoms. Once only afterwards, in the days of another great general, the second Jeroboam, was there a gleam of the glory of David's reign. Of him it is written, that 'he restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain : ' and, 'the rest of the acts of Jeroboam, and all that he did, and his might, how he warred, and how he recovered Damascus and Hamath for Israel, are they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Israel ?'

The career, I repeat, was a singularly successful one. Here is the description of it at its commencement : 'And Samuel

said unto Jesse, Are here all thy children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Send and fetch him : for we will not sit down till he come hither. And he sent, and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to. And the Lord said, Arise, anoint him : for this is he. Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren : and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward.' And here is the description of it, as it proceeded : 'And David went on, and grew great, and the Lord God of hosts was with him.' And here is the description of it at its close : 'And David died in a good old age, full of days, riches, and honour ; and Solomon his son reigned in his stead.'

Here, then, is a career of remarkable success. And the question is, 'What was the secret of this success? How was it that the peasant boy contrived to climb to a throne ; and to make it the throne of such an empire as *his* ultimately became?' I take the words of my text as our guide in answering this question.

They are taken, you see, from a Book which does not attempt either to disguise or to palliate the dark passages in David's career. And they purport to be his own words, a review of his own life, when that life was now very near its end. I will read them once more, in the main according to the version of them adopted by the Dean of Westminster in his lectures on the History of the Jewish Church. All the commentators agree that the language in parts is exceedingly obscure ; and the following is, after all, only the best guess that we can make at some of the details of expression, though the general drift of the writer's meaning is clear enough.

'So saith David, the son of Jesse,  
So saith the man who was raised up on high,  
The anointed of the God of Jacob,  
And the sweet singer of Israel.'

Or,

‘Pleasant in the songs of Israel,’

that is, the darling of the songs of Israel.

‘The Spirit of Jehovah speaketh in me,  
And his strains are on my tongue ;  
The God of Israel hath said,  
The Rock of Israel hath spoken to me ;

‘If a man rule over men justly, ruling in the fear of God,  
It is as when a morning is bright, and the sun riseth,  
A morning, and no clouds :  
After sunshine, after rain, the tender grass springeth from the  
earth.

‘Although my house be not so with God,  
Yet he hath made with me an everlasting  
Covenant, ordered in all things and sure :  
For all my salvation, and all my desire,—  
Yea, will he not cause it to grow ?’

‘But the sons of Belial are all of them as abominable thorns  
that cannot be grasped with the hand. And the man that shall  
touch them must be fenced with iron and the wood of spears.  
And with fire they shall be burnt, and burnt forthwith.’

‘It is a melancholy strain,’ writes the Dean of Westminster,  
‘to close a song which begins so full of brightness and joy. But  
it is a true picture of the chequered life of David, and of the  
chequered fortunes of the ruler amongst men. It is a true  
picture of the ‘broken lights’ of the human heart, whether in  
Judæa or in England, whether of king or of peasant. If there  
be any part of Scripture which betrays the movements of the  
human individual soul, it is this precious fragment of David’s  
life. If there be any part which claims for itself, and which  
gives evidence of, the breathing of the Spirit of God, it is this  
also. Such a rugged, two-edged monument is the fitting

memorial of the man who was at once the king and the prophet, the penitent and the saint, of the ancient Church.'

But our question is, 'What was the secret of the success, the astonishing success, of David's life? What explanation do his own words give of it?' Let us weigh his words well, and see if they do not furnish us with a clue to the answer.

Of course we must take for granted his great natural gifts. Signal successes, such as David's, in the arts of war and government, are not to be achieved without these. Amongst these natural gifts—the capital, with which he started on his career—we must reckon the following, which the narrative clearly indicates:—strength and beauty of person, a fearlessness which amounted to a positive delight in danger, a singular prudence and sagacity, an extraordinary power of winning the affections of those around him, of discerning their qualities and qualifications, and of placing the right man always in the right place. That assembly of notables at the end of his life must have been a very remarkable assembly,—an assembly of men, who had won their way to distinction by a genuine process of natural selection, pursued through the many years of David's active and vigorous reign, weeding out the weak and incompetent, leaving only the strong and the capable.

These gifts, however, by themselves would not have produced the result which we see in David's case; though, being what they were, they could not but have produced a result of one kind or another. The gifts are *one* thing; the character, which uses the gifts, guides them, and so gives a certain bent and direction to the result, is *another* thing. Now it is the *character* of the man that comes out in these last words of his; and, along with the character, the fruits of his life's *experience*. In this connection,—on the question of character,—the opening words of this dying strain of his are exceedingly suggestive.

'Thus saith David, the son of Jesse,  
Thus saith the man who was raised up on high,

The anointed of the God of Jacob,  
And the darling of the songs of Israel.'

What are the thoughts in which these words are steeped? Surely love of the home and the family, love of his people and country, but above all the sense of a Divine election and calling. The 'son of Jesse,' the 'darling of Israel;' but, far above everything else, the 'man raised up on high,' the 'anointed of the God of Jacob.'

Here we have the elements of a true and noble human life, whether man's or woman's, wheresoever lived and whensoever, two thousand years ago or to-day, in England or under the burning skies of Palestine. The home, the nation, God ;—where shall we find more inspiring, elevating forces than in what these words represent or suggest? The thought of his father's house and his father's love ; the dear delight of being honoured and loved by those around him ; but, above all, the consciousness of God, and of what he owed to God, and of what God was calling him to *be* as well as to *do* :—these were the sources, from which David drank in virtue, strength, courage, patience, for the stern and arduous duties of his daily life. And are not these still some of the purest and most helpful springs, from which *we* can drink ?

They failed him,—even these failed him,—in that dark hour of temptation, when he marred and spoiled his life, and made such a mess of it, that every bungler in life's hard business of truly living has been able to point the finger of scorn at him ever since. But, when he came to himself again, his first words revealed at once what the true principle of his life had been, and would again be. 'I have sinned,' he said, '*against the Lord.*' '*I*, the man raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, what have *I* done? How low have *I* fallen! Into what a pit of infamy and degradation have *I* sunk, that I should be the murderer of my bravest and most devoted

servant, and the seducer of his wife ! *I*, whom God was calling to be the hero-king of his elect people !'

I gather, then, from the very first words of the song, what were, in David's case, the *principles* that lay at the root of his character and made it what it was. And what was it ? Surely, in the main, a very fine, a very noble, a very lovable character ; capable of *falling* certainly (who is not ? let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall), but capable also of rising again, and standing more firmly than before. Does his fall make him a warning only, and nothing but a warning to *us* ? Is he to be condemned to do an everlasting penance for that black crime of his, in the sight of all generations, down to the great judgment day ? Or may we not now, like the chronicler of old, throw a veil over that ugly and horrible transaction, and take the man to our hearts as worthy of all honour and love,—a right noble specimen of what a man may become, when he holds fast by God and by his brother man. Yes ; when he holds fast by God, first and above everything else, ever saying to himself, 'God, even the living God, is calling me to *be* this or that : I must *be* it. God has his will for me and his way for me : I must do that will, I must walk in that way. His fatherly hand is over me, his Holy Spirit is with me, in order that I may be and do what He is calling me to be and do. So help me God, *that* will I be, and *that* will I do.'

And now as to the results, the practical results, which David's experience of life yielded him. Of course he, like every one else, found that there were men of Belial in the world—thorns that could only be handled with (as it were) an iron glove, and for whom there could be no lasting room in God's universe,—nothing but fire in the end. Of *this* David speaks, as most men would speak, with a certain amount of bitterness and irritation. Such men of Belial had vexed and angered him ; had thwarted his plans for good ; had done him and his kingdom an infinity of harm : and the anger and vexation naturally enough come out.

As to this, however, we need say nothing now. This is by the way. The real and positive fruit of David's experience of life explains itself in what he says about *justice*,—the value of justice, the need of justice, the happiness and well-being that come of justice. He speaks, as we should expect him to do, *as a king*; and of the justice which is required of one, who is to be a true ruler of men. But his words admit of a wider interpretation than he possibly intended. The best account that we can give of justice is to say, that it is *the fulfilment of relations*. We are just men and women, in proportion as we deal with the human beings around us, according to the relations in which we stand to them, and the claims which they consequently have upon us. And he who would be *just* must ever be on the watch to discover or to understand, what *exactly* that relation to others is, and what is the demand which each particular relation makes upon him. The most distinct and definite relations are, I need hardly say, those which we describe by the words husband, wife, father, mother, son, daughter, brother, sister, master, servant, friend, neighbour, and so on. But these are by no means all; and he, who would be truly just, must not be content with fulfilling the more obvious relations of life in a rough and ready way; but must ever look beneath the surface, and strive to trace out, and to the utmost of his power fulfil, *all* the relations to others, into which, under the Providence of God, he may from time to time be brought.

Now, if we are really trying to do this, as David was really trying to fulfil his relation to his subjects as their king, *we* shall feel, as *he* felt, how far we are from coming up to the justice which we aim at. With him we shall make the confession, 'Although my house be not so with God.' With him we shall also share the conviction, which he bodies forth in vague and faltering and tremulous words, that God's will is *with* us and *for* us; is helping us; is not against us, but is on our side; and that what we strive after, honestly and earnestly, here and now, will in some way or other be made good to us hereafter.

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For us, too, as for him, there is the 'everlasting covenant,' 'ordered in all things and sure.' For us, too, as for him, is it not true that what we feel to be 'all our salvation,' and desire with all our hearts *here*, God will in his own good time and way '*make to grow*.' In other words,—in our Saviour's words,—only let us hunger and thirst after righteousness *now*, and that righteousness shall be ours to perfection *then*.



## SERMON XL.

ELISHA.

2 KINGS iv. 34.

And he went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands : and he stretched himself upon the child ; and the flesh of the child waxed warm.

TO-DAY, again, our lessons from the Old Testament are such that I find it impossible to pass them by without comment. This morning we had the story of Micaiah's courageous bearing in the presence of Ahab and Jehoshaphat. And this evening we have, as alternative lessons, the story of Elijah's ascension,—about which I took occasion to speak to you a few weeks ago,—and the chapter from which I have taken my text for to-night.

We pass then, this evening, from Elijah to Elisha. But, before doing so, there is something that needs to be said about the position and office of the prophets of God in those stormy and perilous times. The history of Elijah might lead us to suppose, that he stood alone as a prophet of God in his own day. 'I, even I only, am left,'—was his despairing account of the situation, when in the wilderness. But the chapter which we were reading in church this morning shows, that this was not really the case. Micaiah was worthy to stand by the side even

of Elijah. Not only so,—not only were there *true* prophets of the Lord, cotemporary with Elijah,—there were also many, who claimed to speak in the name of the Lord, without any real commission to do so. When Ahab proposes to Jehoshaphat to wage war against the king of Syria for the possession of Ramoth Gilead, the answer of Jehoshaphat is : ‘Enquire, I pray thee, at the word of the Lord to-day.’ Whereupon Ahab, we are told, summons the prophets together, about four hundred men, and puts the question to them : ‘Shall I go against Ramoth Gilead to battle, or shall I forbear?’ To which their reply is, ‘Go up and prosper ; for the Lord’—Jehovah, the Eternal—‘shall deliver it into the king’s hand.’ One of them, Zedekiah by name, when confronted with Micaiah, has even the audacity to say to him, ‘Which way went the Spirit of the Lord from me to speak unto thee?’

The facts recorded in this chapter give rise to many reflections. We can hardly be wrong in supposing, that the state of things thus described was due in great measure to Elijah’s triumphant exposure of the vanity and worthlessness of the popular Baal-worship of the day upon Mount Carmel, and to his massacre of the prophets of Baal in the valley below. It just shows, how delusive such triumphs are. For the moment Baal-worship was unpopular, and to be a prophet of Baal was to pursue an unhonoured, if not a dangerous, vocation. It appeared to the popular mind, that there was another God stronger than Baal, and that his name was Jehovah. Therefore these four hundred prophets prophesied in the name of Jehovah ; whereas, a little while before, they would have prophesied in the name of Baal. The name only was changed ; the thing remained the same. Their thoughts of Jehovah were just what their thoughts of Baal had been. Nothing was gained,—it was only profanation,—to use the name Jehovah, when what they were really thinking of and inwardly worshipping was *Baal*, a god of mere strength and power, not of mercy and of righteousness. Now this is a warning to us Christians, that it is quite possible to

worship the Father, just as those prophets were worshipping Jehovah the Eternal ; to worship Him in name, but not in spirit and in truth ; to worship, under the name Father, not 'the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,'—not Him, of whom Jesus says, 'I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and unto my God and your God ;' *but* a different Being altogether. Never let us forget, that we are not worshipping the Father '*in truth*,' if we are not thinking of Him as Jesus would have us think of Him ; and that we are not worshipping Him '*in spirit*,' if we are not really giving our hearts and wills to Him.

Again, as we read the narrative, we cannot help seeing, that, after all, the position of the *hearers* in those ancient days was not so very unlike our own. True voices and false voices came to their ears,—true and false alike claiming to issue from the one fountain and source of truth. How were *they* to distinguish—how are *we* to distinguish—the true voice from the false ? Of course, when the matter reduced itself to a simple prediction of an event, which a few weeks would decide, the thing was easy enough. Micaiah staked everything upon *this* : 'If thou return at all in peace, the Lord hath not spoken by me.' And the event proved him to be the one true prophet, by the side of a host of false ones. But in the vast majority of cases there was no such easy and immediate test of truth. The best part of every true prophet's work lay quite outside the realm of miracle and prediction. The last and greatest of the long line of prophets, John the Baptist, wrought not a single miracle ; uttered not a single prediction, that admitted of the application of some immediate test. How, under such circumstances, were the hearers to distinguish the true voice from the false ? Jesus Himself has answered the question for us. His charge against the chief priests and elders of his day is, so far as the work of the Baptist is concerned, *this* : 'John came unto you *in the way of righteousness*, and ye believed him not.' Does the voice, which we hear, make for righteousness, or does it not ? If it does, there is truth in it ; if it does not, it is false. This

moral test is, and ever must be, the ultimate one. Amongst the many voices that address themselves to our ears in these puzzling and perilous days,—all claiming to be the voice of truth, yet speaking in such diverse and even discordant tones,—it is thus that *we* must distinguish the true from the false. ‘By their fruits’—whether of righteousness or of unrighteousness—‘ye shall know them.’

That Elijah’s work made on the whole for righteousness, none can doubt, however mistaken might be the methods which he occasionally employed. He was emphatically a preacher and doer of righteousness. And as it was with the master, so it was also with the servant. The impression left upon those with whom Elisha came in contact, by his words and by his works, was that which the Shunammite woman expressed thus: ‘Behold now, I perceive that this is an holy man of God, which passeth by us continually.’

Now as to this Shunammite, and the narrative which we have been reading in church this evening,—the child’s birth and the child’s death, and the mother’s intense silent grief, and her determination not to rest, until she had found Elisha and brought him home with her to the little chamber on the wall, where she had laid the body of her son,—all this reads like any other story of life and death—a child’s death, and a mother’s grief for her only son. We can all of us go along with the human interest of the story, and feel how natural and lifelike it is. It is not till we come to the miraculous part of the narrative that any of us will be in danger of losing their hold upon it,—not till we come to *this*: ‘Then he said to Gehazi, Gird up thy loins, and take my staff in thine hand, and go thy way: if thou meet any man, salute him not; and if any salute thee, answer him not again: and lay my staff upon the face of the child. And the mother of the child said, As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And he arose and followed her. And Gehazi passed on before them, and laid the staff upon the face of the child; but there

was neither voice, nor hearing. Wherefore he went again to meet him, and told him, saying, The child is not awaked. And when Elisha was come into the house, behold, the child was dead, and laid upon his bed. He went in therefore, and shut the door upon them twain, and prayed unto the Lord. And he went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands: and he stretched himself upon the child; and the flesh of the child waxed warm. Then he returned, and walked in the house to and fro; and went up, and stretched himself upon him; and the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes. And he called Gehazi, and said, Call this Shunammite. So he called her. And when she was come in unto him, he said, Take up thy son. Then she went in, and fell at his feet, and bowed herself to the ground, and took up her son, and went out.'

Now at this point, I say, a few of us will doubtless part company with the rest, feeling the human interest of the story to the last, but doubting or at least puzzling over the miraculous element in it. Now, as I said last Sunday, it is impossible at this distance of time either to prove or to disprove the truth of such a narrative. Both the proof and the disproof involve a preliminary assumption, which we have no right to make. The proof would require us to assume, that every word of the Bible is infallibly true, (an assumption which we are not justified in making); *therefore* this narrative, in every detail, is true. The disproof would require us to assume that miracles are impossible and incredible, (an assumption which no sound philosophy would justify us in making); *therefore* this narrative, at least in its miraculous details, is false. Under these circumstances, since we can neither prove nor disprove the miraculous element in the story, what shall we do? Shall we go on weighing and balancing the evidence, for and against,—reaching at last only some timid half-hearted conclusion, one way or the other? Or is it possible to give the go-by to such questions altogether, and

extract instruction and profit from the narrative by some other method? I believe that it is possible to do so; otherwise I should not have ventured to take precisely the miraculous part of the story as my text to-night.

For there are some passages in the Bible, and this is one of them, which suggest at once to the mind an allegorical treatment. As we read them, we are constrained to say with St. Paul, as he read the story of Hagar and Sarah, 'Which things are an allegory.' We do not mean to say that they were written as allegories,—written as anything but plain sober narratives, as to the truth of which the writers entertained not a shadow of doubt. But they suggest of themselves to our minds truths of a higher order, which we feel to be full of profit and instruction for us. 'Yes,' we say to ourselves in this particular case, 'so it is still, and so it ever will be: the staff laid upon the dead child's face will never restore the child to life. The man himself, the living man, must come, and stretch himself upon the child, mouth to mouth, eye to eye, hand to hand; or it will never live again: *that* is the one hope of life for the child.' Now the moment we have got hold of this truth of a higher order, we cease to trouble ourselves about the details of the narrative. Whether Gehazi and Elisha did exactly as the narrative says, or no,—*this* cannot be matter of spiritual instruction and edification to us. That which the narrative suggests to our minds is true and profitable, whatever may be our thoughts about the truth of the narrative itself.

Not the staff laid upon the face, but the living man stretched upon the dead child again and again, until warmth and life return,—*that* is the substance of the narrative on its miraculous side, is it not? And of *this* I say again: 'It is an allegory: there is more here than meets the ear: it suggests an order of truths, which are much higher than itself, and are for ever true.'

We are speaking now of imparting life to that which is dead. And we have risen far above the dead child and the Gehazi

and the Elisha of the narrative. We are thinking of life intellectual, moral, spiritual, such as we all need ; and of the torpid minds, the cold hearts, and the dead souls, of which, alas, there are such multitudes around us. Again and again we find ourselves laying Gehazi's staff on the dead face, as though *that* would suffice to impart warmth and life. And of course it *does* not do so ; it cannot do so. For example, a clergyman, aided by the congregation, will, as the phrase goes, organize his parish well ; will have day schools, and Sunday schools, and district visitors, and provident societies, and evening classes, and so forth. Very good all this is, very useful, very necessary. But it is still only the staff laid on the dead face and mere outside of things:—of itself it will never bring the dead to life again. Or in the pulpit he will preach a system of doctrines, the orthodoxy of which, according to the measure and standard of the times, is unimpeachable. It is still only as the staff laid on the cold outside of the intellect,—commanding at the best a bare and barren assent, nothing more. It is not till he learns to put the living mind and soul and heart against mind and soul and heart (as Elisha put mouth upon mouth, and eye upon eye, and hand upon hand), that he can impart any true warmth and life to those around him. And it is not until the same spirit breathes upon and through the whole parochial machinery, and every worker lays a living Christian character in close spiritual contact with those for whom he works, that the flesh of the dead child can wax warm, and the child open his eyes. Till then, there will be neither voice nor hearing. Till then, the best that can be said is, 'The child is not awaked.' Not by organization, not by mere doctrine, but by application of soul to soul ; so, and only so, can life enter.

I have taken my illustration from clerical experience, merely for convenience sake, and because I could only be familiar with such. And I need not tell you, how much I feel the rebuke of my own illustration. But, indeed, the truth which I am trying to illustrate is of the widest possible application.

From the dead staff no life can come. Only that which is already quick can quicken. Dead characters and dead intellects cannot propagate *life*, moral life and intellectual life,—it is well if they do not propagate *death*,—around them. Nay, often that which *is* living must give out of its own life, in order to communicate life. Life must go out of us, if we are to impart life. By slow waste of our own life we give life. ‘Verily I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but, if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.’

Yes, and there is something, too, in that mouth to mouth, eye to eye, hand to hand. The man must often contract himself, intellectually at least, to the dimensions and stature of the child, if he is to impart life. A point of intellectual contact must ever be found between the teacher and the taught, whatever be the subject of the teaching. Take, as an example of the highest kind of teaching, St. Paul at Antioch in Pisidia, St. Paul at Lystra, St. Paul at Athens. At Antioch he is the *Few*, pleading with Jews, on the ground of the Holy Scriptures dear to both; at Lystra he is the *man*, pleading with his fellow-men, on the common ground of natural religion; at Athens he is the educated *gentleman*, pleading with educated men, on the ground of a common cultivation. And *because* he knew so well how to put mouth upon mouth, and eye upon eye, and hand upon hand,—how to contract himself to the requirements of each particular case, and never (as the saying is) to preach over the heads of his hearers; *therefore* it was that St. Paul was the most successful missionary and preacher of the gospel that the world has ever seen. Under the touch of his intellect and soul, the child waxed warm and opened his eyes.

But it is time for us to draw our allegory to a conclusion. I fancy I hear some of us saying, ‘What is all this to *us*? How does it affect *us*? What lesson has it for *us*?’ And these are questions, which it would be well for us all, for myself as well as for you, to ask. I shall have missed my mark altogether, if



I allow you to go away under the impression, that to-night there was no word of doctrine, of reproof, of correction, of instruction in righteousness, for us all.

I take it for granted, then, that there is not a soul here that has come to years of discretion, that does not wish to do good to at least some one other human soul. There are those amongst us, of course, whose Christian ambition will take a wider range and scope than *this*. But I may surely assume, that there is not one, who would not desire to make some one soul better than it is. Well then, our allegory tells us how only *this* can be done. Only out of the life that is in us can we impart life. Only by the force of our own character for good can we impress other characters for good. If there is no force for good, if there is no true life in us, we can impart no life, we can impress none for good. We must go to the root of the matter in ourselves, if we would reach and touch for good the root of life in others.

Let none cry out, 'We are so hampered, so imprisoned in our circumstances, that we are utterly helpless for good, and can work no deliverance, even on the smallest scale, in our Israel.' I answer in the words of another: 'The situation that has not its duty, its ideal,' and (I would add) its power of influencing others for good, 'was never yet occupied by man. Yes, here, in this poor, miserable, hampered, despicable actual, wherein thou even now standest, here or nowhere is thy ideal: work it out therefore; and working, believe, live, be free. The ideal is in thyself; the impediment too is in thyself; thy condition is but the stuff thou art to shape that same ideal out of; what matters whether such stuff be of this sort or of that, so the form thou give it be what it ought to be.'

Or, in other words,—in the language of our text and its context,—the dead child is even now within thy reach, laid, as it were, upon thine own bed; so near is he. First go in, like Elisha, and shut the door, and pray unto the Lord. Then address thyself with quiet, earnest, persistent effort, to thy task.

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This dead child, what ~~is~~ he, for *thee*? Some son or daughter, some friend,—it matters not who or what he be,—some one there surely is, whom thou wouldest influence for good. Seek then, with all thy heart and soul, to *be* THAT, which thou wouldest persuade him to be. There is no other way. This very *seeking* of thine, though as yet rewarded by little attainment, is nevertheless, in so far as it is honest and true, a power for good, a quickening, life-giving power. Time and experience will show thee, how best to lay mouth to mouth, and eye to eye, and hand to hand. The quickening force is already in thee. In due season it will have its way. The flesh of the dead child shall wax warm. He will yet open his eyes and live.

## SERMON XLI.

## IMMORTALITY.

LUKE xx. 37, 38.

Now that the dead are raised, even Moses shewed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living : for all live unto him.

SO ends St. Luke's version of the memorable scene, when the Sadducees came to Jesus, on the last day of his public ministry, with that question of theirs, which, in their view, was fatal to the notion—decisive against the very possibility—of a resurrection : 'Therefore in the resurrection whose wife of them is she? for seven had her to wife.'

St. Matthew and St. Mark have recorded the same incident ; but of the three versions none is so striking nor so characteristic as St. Luke's. He alone has the remarkable words : '*All live unto him.*' And in the direct answer to the Sadducees' question, where the report of St. Matthew and St. Mark is only this, or like this,—'In the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven,'—St. Luke's record runs at much greater length and fulness, though substantially the same in meaning, thus : 'The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage : but they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection

from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage : neither can they die any more : for they are equal unto the angels ; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.'

Human speculation runs, again and again, its weary round, and brings uppermost, time after time, the same doubts, the same difficulties, the same denials. The old enemies reappear with new faces. Pharisee and Sadducee are still amongst us, with changed name indeed and altered intellectual garb, but yet fundamentally the same. To deny the resurrection, that is, to deny the immortality of the soul,—as the Sadducees denied it,—is not now confined, as once it was, to a mere vulgar commonplace infidelity. There are those amongst us, who, in a frenzy of apparent self-sacrifice, profess themselves prepared to surrender their own personal individual immortality,—upborne, in doing so, by a faith in the destinies and immortality of the race. And, again, there are those, who, without going this length, speak of the life beyond the grave with bated breath and in almost despairing tones, as though it were at the most a possibility and a peradventure, which must not be reckoned upon with the slightest confidence. And, as is usual in this strange age of ours, such dreary thoughts and dismal speculations as these are freely ventilated in the periodical literature of the day, and thus insinuate themselves into minds totally unprepared to face and discuss them.

It cannot be unseasonable, then, to turn from the denials of our own day to the parallel or analogous denials of some twenty centuries ago, and to mark how our Lord Jesus Christ Himself met them, when He came, as He must needs do, in conflict with them. To transfer his rejoinder to the Sadducees from the first century to the nineteenth, and to apply it to our own wants and the wants of our time, cannot be a difficult task for any of us. For never was there a teacher, whose methods and arguments were so entirely independent of the modes of thought of his own day,—so universally applicable to the human mind, always and everywhere.

It was, then, on the last and greatest day of his public ministry,—the Tuesday before the Friday on which He suffered,—that the Sadducees brought to Jesus their question about the Resurrection. They had been preceded by the Pharisees and Herodians ; and they were followed by Pharisees and Lawyers. For, as I have often pointed out to you, this last day of the public ministry of Jesus was the great day of questions ; all his opponents exhausting all their ingenuity, one after another, in framing questions, the answers to which should, in one way or another, prove his ruin, either by undermining his popularity, or by compromising Him with the Roman Authorities. The preceding question had been about the Roman tribute ; and his answer to it had been such as to compel the reluctant admiration even of the questioners themselves. St. Luke says : ‘ They could not take hold of his words before the people ; and they marvelled at his answer, and held their peace.’ It was now the Sadducees’ turn.

The Evangelists preface their narratives of what followed with the remark that the Sadducees denied that there was any resurrection. What they meant by this denial of the resurrection is made clearer by a reference to that famous passage in the Acts of the Apostles, in which St. Paul is described as taking advantage of the controversy between the Sadducees and the Pharisees on this question of the resurrection to divide the Council, and to secure for his own, or rather for the Christian, cause the sympathies of the majority. In connection with this scene the writer of the Acts observes : ‘ The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit : but the Pharisees confess both.’ From this statement of St. Luke’s it cannot but be inferred, that the Sadducees were, in fact, what *we* should call *materialists* ; that they denied, not merely the resurrection of the body, but the immortality of the soul. Their horizon was absolutely bounded by this life. In their view, as soon as the breath was out of the body, *all was over*. It is necessary, that we should understand the full extent,

to which the Sadducean denial of the resurrection went; and it is necessary, that we should also understand the ground of that denial. Whilst the Pharisee believed, that Moses had bequeathed to Israel not only the written law, but also the oral law or unwritten tradition, in which was distinctly included the belief in a future state of rewards and punishments; the Sadducee, on the contrary, denied the Mosaic Authorship of this last, and, along with this, and as a logical result of this, denied every doctrine that was not included in the first. To *him*, whatever was not actually a part of the written law had no claim upon his faith. For 'to the Jews Moses was and is a colossal form, pre-eminent in authority above all subsequent prophets. Hence scarcely any Jew would have deemed himself bound to believe in man's resurrection, unless the doctrine had been proclaimed by Moses; and as the Sadducees disbelieved the transmission of any oral law by Moses, the striking absence of that doctrine from the written law freed them from the necessity of accepting the doctrine as divine.' They took their stand simply upon the written law of Moses. Whatever could not be proved therefrom had in their view no claim upon their faith. The immortality of the soul,—its existence in a future state of rewards and punishments,—had, in their judgment, no place in the written law; and, therefore, they rejected the doctrine. The Pharisee on the other hand held, that, though not included in the written law, the doctrine was included in the oral law or traditional teaching of Moses; and, *therefore*, he accepted it as a leading article of his faith. But the Pharisees' mode of stating the doctrine was often as unsatisfactory as the ground upon which they held it; was often so coarse and materialistic, as to expose them fairly to that '*reductio ad absurdum*,' which is involved in the Sadducees' question as to the woman, married successively to seven husbands, and dying herself childless after the seventh.

It is important, I repeat, that we should understand both the extent of the Sadducees' unbelief and the ground on which it

rested. Otherwise we shall fail to understand the force of the reply of Jesus, his selection of arguments, and his whole treatment of the case. Let us now turn to this.

In the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Mark his reply is prefaced with the words: 'Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, neither the power of God:' and in St. Mark's Gospel it is terminated with the words: 'Ye therefore do greatly err.' It has been said, that Jesus' treatment of the Sadducees and their denials is more lenient, is less stern, than his treatment of the Pharisees. The hypocritical disingenuousness of the Pharisees, bringing the Herodians with them to give a colour of sincerity to their question about the tribute-money, had something specially revolting in it, and might well earn them the rebuke: 'Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites?' The unbelief of the Sadducees had at any rate the merit of being frank and open. In addition to this, so long as the controversy about the resurrection lay between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, there was little to choose, in point of error and truth, between the two. The Sadducees denied the Mosaic Authorship of the Unwritten Law; and they were right in doing this. They went on to deny the immortality of the soul, on the ground that it lay outside the teaching of the Written Law, and therefore had no claim to be reckoned an article of faith: and they were wrong in doing this. The Pharisees received the doctrine of a future state of reward and punishment; and rightly so. But they received it on a false ground,—a ground, which had no existence, except in their own fancy: and they received it in a false form,—a form so false and materialistic, that the answer of Jesus to the Sadducees is levelled as much against the misbelief of the Pharisees as against the unbelief of the Sadducees.

That answer divides itself at once, as we can all see, into two parts. The particular problem raised by the Sadducees is first dealt with; and then the general question of the resurrection is entered upon, and is entered upon in such a way as would

command the respectful attention even of the Sadducees: 'Now that the dead *are* raised, even *Moses* shewed at the bush:—'*even Moses shewed*,' *not* in some unwritten law, which you do well to reject, *but* in that written record, to the authenticity and the genuineness of which you make no demur.

The paradise of the Pharisee was little, if at all, better than the paradise of Mahomet. It was merely a repetition of the life that now is. Of the possibility of such a paradise the problem of the Sadducees might almost serve as a refutation. But in this, as in so many other cases, the excesses and perversions of faith had produced corresponding unbeliefs and denials. How much we have seen of this, even within the narrow space of our own experience! Infallibility of the Bible, plenary inspiration of the Holy Scriptures; *this* has been one of the watchwords of the Pharisees of our own day, with such obvious Sadducean results as it is unnecessary to dwell upon. And if, just now, *those* are to be found, who boldly impugn in Sadducee-fashion the immortality of the soul; *they* are not without their share of responsibility for it, who, in defiance of St. Paul's assertion that 'flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God,' have taught, that every particle of that dead body, which is laid in the grave to see corruption, will be raised again,—will be pursued through all its innumerable transformations and recovered from them all, in order to aid in building up that glorified body that is to be the organ of the soul beyond death. Thus does the Pharisee ever generate the Sadducee. Thus do the extravagances of faith ever produce a corresponding reaction into unbelief.

The first thing, then, that Jesus does, is to rescue the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, and of the life beyond death, from its Pharisaic accretions and perversions, and to present it, in its purity and also in its mystery, to the faith of the denying Sadducee. 'The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage: but they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: neither can they die any



more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.'

What would we not give, brethren, to have the opportunity of questioning Jesus over these words of his; so many are the thoughts which they awaken! We can all see, of course, how He sweeps away by them in a moment all that coarse materialism of the Pharisee, which had produced, or at least had almost justified, the equally coarse materialistic denials of the Sadducee; how He restores to the belief in a future state that mystery and that spirituality, without which it is almost powerless for moral good. But a thousand questions suggest themselves to us as to the nature of that mysterious life beyond death, to which we would fain find some sort of answer. It cannot be, however. We must be content to leave it, as Christ Himself has left it; saying to ourselves, as we think of those whom we have loved and lost, with wondering awe: 'Be it with them as it may, at any rate they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.'

Much more important for us in this present life is that second half of his answer to the Sadducees, in which He deals with the question of immortality, and deigns to give a reason for our faith in it. 'Now that the dead *are* raised,'—that the immortality of the soul is no dream of enthusiasts, nor figment either of religion or of philosophy, but sober certainty and most solid fact, —'even Moses shewed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living; for all live unto him.' The words, as they stand in the Book of Exodus, are these: 'And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The Eternal, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you; this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations.'

We ask with the deepest interest here, what the point and

force of the argument is. How did Moses show the immortality of the soul, or, to speak more exactly, How was the truth of the immortality of the soul conveyed to Moses, by that name of the Eternal, which described Him as the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? Simply thus, brethren: That God should as it were give Himself thus to these men, saying, for example, to Abraham, 'Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward;' *this*, of itself, implied that there was *that* in them, and therefore in all other men, which was immortal,—which was indestructible by death. In other words, the capacity of knowing God, of loving God, of trusting and obeying God, is the surest pledge of immortality. We carry the consciousness of immortality within us, in proportion as we do thus know and love, trust and obey, God. The appeal of Christ is made *not* as it is in so many noble works of great human thinkers, such as Plato and Cicero and the like, to trains of argument more or less conclusive, but never wholly satisfying—*but* to the highest instincts and capacities of our common human nature. These, He says, testify unmistakably to the fact of our immortality. That it should be possible for man to say, as the Psalmist says, 'O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee;' bears witness of itself, in tones which cannot be mistaken, that the death of his *body* is not *his* death.

The more carefully you look into the matter, dear brethren, the more thoroughly you will be persuaded, I feel convinced, both that this is the force of the argument of Jesus, and that the argument *is* most forcible. Nothing, you will soon satisfy yourselves, turns upon the 'I am' of St. Matthew's record,—'Have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?' The 'am' of St. Matthew's record disappears in St. Mark's; whilst in St. Luke's nothing is left but the simple assertion, which alone is common to the three Gospels, of the relation between God and man, implied in the words, 'God of

Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob.' The whole argument of Jesus turns upon the possibility and the existence of such a relation. Every time that man looks up to God with the cry of *yearning*, if not of *faith*,—or at least of unbelief, struggling to believe,—'O God, thou art my God ; my soul thirsteth for thee ;' he proves his own immortality. To be able to do this is to be able to do *that*, which makes annihilation incredible, inconceivable, impossible. God's eternity is the guarantee of the immortality of the being, who can so cry to Him.

*This*, I think we may say, is Christ's first and last word upon this subject of immortality. Neither do I see how we are ever likely to get beyond it. Transformed out of the particular case of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, into the most general statement that the argument admits of, it becomes *this* of St. Luke's record : 'God is not a God of dead persons, but of living souls ; for all to Him *live*.' He sees all as *living* ; not merely living through the short span of this life ; but living through death, and beyond it, without a moment's intermission or interruption of life. That continuity of the soul's life, which is broken for us who are left behind, is unbroken for God. We have no faculties wherewith to pursue the living soul through and beyond the gateway of death. Hence our difficulty. Hence it is, that death seems to *us* so vast and dread a thing ; whereas to the eye of God it is as nothing. Were it what the Sadducees took it to be, it would also, Jesus implies, be much more than they took it to be. The baleful shadow of it would fall on the whole antecedent life, and smite it with barrenness and death. This seeming life would be 'as death ; and man would be a being incapable of any such relation to God, as even the Sadducee recognized the possibility of. To believe that death is annihilation, that there is *nothing* beyond, is to make man incapable of that relation to the eternal God which constitutes his true life. While seeming to live, he is really dead ; and the theory, which accounts of him so and thus converts life into death, runs counter to the obvious truth, that God is not, and

cannot be, *God* to dead creatures, but only to living souls. In every way then it would appear, that man's capacity of being *that* to God which is implied in the words, 'O God, thou art my God,' is the pledge and guarantee of his immortality. Let him in dying commit himself, as did the dying Jesus, into the Father's hands ; and he will be safe there.

On the grave of that good soldier of Christ, Charles Kingsley, there are inscribed three Latin words, written by him to serve as the inscription on his wife's grave, at a time when it was thought that she would be the first to go. The Latin words are these : 'Amavimus, Amamus, Amabimus ;' or, in English, 'We have loved, we love, we shall love.' The love, past and present, being what it was, was, in his view, the pledge of the future love ; carried in itself the security of its own permanence, the guarantee of its own immortality. But reverse the thought ; translate it backwards ; start from the theory, that death is annihilation ;—and what then becomes of the love present and past ? Strike out the 'amabimus ;' and what becomes of the 'amavimus' or the 'amamus' ? Does it, can it, remain the same ? Or is the love, first and last, cankered at the core,—half killed at the very root, by the prospect of its own ephemerousness, —'half dead to know that it will die' ? Can there be any doubt what the answer to these questions must be ? Obliterate the life beyond death, and you revolutionize, unspeakably for the worse, the life on this side of death. It is not love and friendship alone that will suffer under the blighting influence of the extinction of our hope of immortality. The shadow of death will fall thick and heavily, with cruel killing force, upon everything human, just in proportion as it is sweet and beautiful, lofty and pure and excellent. The instincts of our lowest nature may indeed be quickened into morbid activity ; but, alas ! for all that is high and noble and redolent of glory. For all this it will be according to the striking, startling, yet most true thought of Jesus. The world of the living will become a world of the dead ; a world of beings to whom it must be said,

‘Children, you have no Father here, because you have *no future* hereafter.’

It is high time for writers in the public prints to consider what they really mean, and what they are really aiming at, when they fling so rashly and recklessly about them the sparks of a conflagration, which, if successful, would turn this poor human life of ours, which is so sad often even at the best, into the dreariest of deserts, into a lava-scorched slope, nay, into a very charnel-house. Or rather, let us say,—lest we should seem to judge others, when we should be judging ourselves,—it is high time for *us* to have done with all this dallying with doubt and denial, to take true measure of the gigantic issues now at stake, and to choose our side accordingly. We need not become Pharisees, because we must not be Sadducees. We need not become bigots and fanatics, because we will not be sceptics and infidels. We need not materialize the world beyond death, because we refuse to deny that there is such a world. Our dear Lord Jesus Christ has shown us the true way, in *this*, as in everything else of real importance,—*the true way*, which is not a poor ‘*via media*,’ that steers painfully between the extremes, but which soars high above both in its firm and tenacious hold upon the mystery and the spirituality of that untrodden world. And He, too, has shown us, how best to maintain our faith in the reality of that untrodden world beyond death; has shown us, that, when we have wearied ourselves with the arguments of the wise or saddened ourselves with the scoffs of the unbeliever, we may yet, with one bound of the soul, recover freedom, elasticity, peace; crying to Him as the lost children might cry to a father, and finding in the mere possibility of such a cry the pledge of a greatness, for which even an eternity with God is not too great.

We will go home then to-night, dear brethren, not with the shadow of death upon our path, blighting and withering it; but with the light of immortality, brightening and blessing and transfiguring it. The human love, that is around us *all*, shall be all the sweeter and purer and more precious to us, as we reflect,

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that it is not of *time* only, but also of *eternity*. And the Divine Love, out of which the human love springs and upon which it ever rests, *as* it is our one hope in death, *so* it shall be our comfort and joy and stay, amidst all the sorrows and trials and burdens of this poor restless and often dangerous life. We will find peace, where alone we can find it, *here* :—*here*, as we say with the Psalmist, ‘Lord, thou hast been—thou art—our dwelling-place,’—our home—‘from generation to generation.’

## SERMON XLII.

## THE PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE.

LUKE xii. 14.

And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you ?

ST. PAUL in one of his Epistles says, that he had learned to 'count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ : '—'for the excellency of the knowledge,' that is, in *consequence* of, and by contrast with, this most excellent knowledge, the knowledge of Christ. The charm of this knowledge had thrown all other things into the shade ; had dashed them ; had dwarfed them into nothingness ; had converted them into something distasteful, unwelcome, or even positively injurious. 'I count all things but *loss*, that I may know and win Christ.' And the other writers of the New Testament hold similar language :—St. Peter's last recorded word to us being this,—'Grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ : '—and St. John laying special stress upon the knowledge of 'him who is from the beginning,' that is, the Word Incarnate.

For *us*, too, there can be no doubt, that the all-important thing is to know Christ better :—'no doubt,' I say, because to know Him better is to be drawn gradually over into his likeness. To know with an appreciative and admiring knowledge one who is altogether worthy of our reverence and trust and

love is to contract something of *that*, which makes him worthy of love and trust and reverence. To bring our own minds and characters into contact with Christ's is to bring them within reach of an influence, which tends to assimilate them to itself. Now this contact can only be established through a knowledge of Christ,—using the word 'knowledge' in its simplest possible sense ;—through a knowledge of his ways of acting, speaking, thinking, feeling. Upon all these points the pages of the Gospels give us ample information ; information so ample, that it is quite possible for us to know Christ better than we can possibly know any character of past history. The personality of Christ, regarded as a merely human personality, is absolutely unmistakable. It stands out from the Gospel pages with lines cut clear and sharp,—most impressive, matchless, unique,—and yet with an atmosphere of vastness and mystery and awe around it, which makes one feel that, when we have told all, much more—almost all—remains untold. To the last, it is still what St. Paul calls 'The Mystery of Christ.'

I make these remarks by way of introduction to the study of a fragment of the Gospel narrative, out of which will emerge, I trust, as we proceed, a clear vision of one or two marked features in the character and personality of Him whom we delight to call 'our *Lord*.' It is sometimes convenient to isolate, if we can, a single day in the life of Jesus ; and to try to realize, what its contents of action and speech were, as morning passed into noon, and noon into evening. It is true, the Gospel narratives never degenerate into mere diaries. Yet, here and there, we find sufficient marks of time to enable us thus to detach a single day from the rest, and to study it by itself,—thereby helping ourselves, it may be, to a more vivid conception of the life, as a life made up of a series of days, each having its own multitude of incidents, little or great, homely or grand. It is, in this way, possible, for example, to isolate a day at the commencement of the ministry of Jesus ; a day as joyous and successful, as this, about which I have to speak to you



to-night, is dark and sombre. For the end is now drawing near, and the shadows of evening are falling fast.

If you will carefully, and at your leisure, examine the eleventh and twelfth chapters of St. Luke's Gospel, I think you will see reason to conclude, that, from xi. 14 to xii. 59, we are reading the events of a single day. I imagine that the scene is laid in Jerusalem, or the neighbourhood of Jerusalem; and that the time is within the last six months of our Lord's earthly life. The starting-point of the narrative of the day's proceedings is the cure of a dumb demoniac; a cure so remarkable, and performed in the presence of such a crowd of spectators, as to produce a great impression, and to reduce some of his enemies to the ridiculous and impossible hypothesis which they expressed thus,—‘He casteth out devils through Beelzebub the chief of the devils,’—whilst others challenged Him to satisfy them, once for all, by ‘a sign from heaven.’ This hypothesis and this challenge are met and dealt with in the closely reasoned and highly condensed discourse, which ends with the thirty-sixth verse of the eleventh chapter. At this point the work of the day is interrupted by an invitation to the ordinary morning or mid-day meal in a Pharisee's house. What took place in this house and at this meal is described in the remainder of the eleventh chapter, or, more exactly, from the thirty-seventh verse to the fifty-second. At the fifty-third verse He quits the house:—(for the right reading is, *not*, ‘And as he said these things unto them,’ *but*, ‘And when he had left the house’):—and resumes the intermitted work of instructing the people. The text of his discourse to them is suggested by the incidents of the previous meal: ‘Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.’ A little while afterwards a fresh text is suggested by the request made to Him by one of the surrounding crowd, ‘Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me.’ And so the marvellous discourse runs on,—addressed, now to the vast crowd at large, and now to the closer circle of his own intimate disciples,—

and pouring a flood of light, now upon the great principles and methods of his own working, and now upon the future of his Church, and now upon what one might be allowed to call a true philosophy of life. The record of the discourse is a marvel of condensation. It would take volumes to unfold, expound, and illustrate it. All that we can do to-night is to single out a minute point or two for investigation, discussion, and practical application.

Let us take, then, as our first point, the words of our text : 'Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?' He is applied to, as a referee or arbiter, in a question of property. 'One of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me.' We have no clue whatever to the merits of the case ; nothing whatever to show, whether the applicant had right on his side, or not. The Evangelist has left the transaction in its barest and most naked form, as a simple application to Jesus to interfere and adjudicate between two brothers on a question of inheritance. And his reply to the application is a blank refusal. 'Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?' 'It is no part of my commission to settle such trivial details as these. I am not here to be at the beck and call of those who are so "immersed in matter" as to imagine that *property* is the all in all of man's life.'

As we read the answer of Jesus, it is impossible not to be reminded of that famous incident in the early life of his great prototype Moses, when the kindly interference, that only sought to reconcile two contending parties, was met, on the part of the wrong-doer, with the angry rejoinder, 'Who made thee a prince and a judge over us?' Had Jesus been induced to interfere in the case thus brought to his notice, it might have been only to encounter a similar repulse. It was impossible for *Him* to commit the mistake which Moses committed ;—which Moses committed, when the hot blood of youth still ran in his veins, and before time and trial had done their sobering work. Jesus

knew, that to be a great reformer,—let alone to be the Saviour of the world,—He must not hamper and encumber his mission with mere details. He came to infuse a new spirit, to create a new ideal, to lift men to a new platform on a higher level. And in order to do *this*, for which He came, it was absolutely necessary to let the small details of life alone, and to concentrate all his efforts upon the inculcation of great principles, which should have in them an inexhaustible power of practical application. The request, 'Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me,' can only be met on his part with a point-blank refusal, followed up by the assertion of a general principle, which struck at the root of all such difficulties, 'Take heed, and beware of covetousness : for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.'

What strikes one most here, I think, is the *sagacity* (if I may be allowed the word), the *practical wisdom*, which could at once see to the end of a proposed line of action, and decline it, because not really, though it might *seem* to be, auxiliary to the great end and aim once and for ever proposed to Himself. The true glory of human life is not speculation, but action. And action, to be true and great, requires insight, foresight, quickness of perception, keen appreciation of distant consequences involved in the present choice. The assemblage of conditions and circumstances, in and under which we have to act, is for ever shifting and changing ; is never for two minutes the same. What we call *statesmanship* is the life of action in one of its highest conceivable forms. Realize for a moment the immense difficulties which the statesmen of Europe have at this moment to contend with in seeking a sound solution of what is known to us all as the Eastern Question. Now the life of Christ, under one of its many aspects, was a life of action on the noblest and grandest scale. The problem, which He proposed to Himself, was, how to insert into the great mass of Humanity that leaven which should eventually leaven the whole. '*Statesmanship*,' '*Reformation*,' (and the words represent great things, great

achievements,) *these* are as nothing compared to the task which Christ undertook, and which we describe by the words, '*redemption*,' '*salvation*,' '*regeneration*.' The Saviour's path was beset with enormous difficulties, of which the temptation in the wilderness is a measure and index. Humanly speaking, it was possible for Him at any moment to make mistakes : otherwise, He could not in any real sense have been, as we are told He was, 'in all points tempted like as we are.' The liability to make mistakes in action is part,—a very troublesome, disagreeable, and painful part,—of our earthly trial. Jesus would have made a mistake, a great mistake, if He had acceded to the brother's request,—if He had met it otherwise than as He did,—*first*, with the direct individual negative, 'Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?'—and, *next*, with the assertion of a general principle which sets human life at once on its true pedestal of honour and dignity : 'A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.'

The refusal of the brother's request is, however, but a very small item in *that* which I venture to describe as the sagacity of Jesus. We trace it, in a still more remarkable form, in his treatment of the many offers of discipleship made to Him on every side. Take just one specimen of this, for which St. Luke again is our authority. He tells us, that once on a time 'there went great multitudes with Jesus : ' a vast admiring crowd, ready at a word to become his disciples, or, rather, his partisans. The word that would have made them his tools was never spoken. On the contrary, He turned almost sternly upon them, and said : 'If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.' Did ever any mere human leader speak so,—in the height of his popularity, in the crisis of his career, at the pinnacle of his fame,—to those who promised so fair to become his devoted followers? Is it wrong to say, that even to Jesus

Himself it was a *tempting moment*; a moment of such temptation as He had faced and defeated once for all in the wilderness, when all the power and glory of the kingdoms of the world were offered to Him on what seemed such easy terms; a moment of veritable *temptation*, proved to be such by the sternness and almost fierceness with which He flung it from Him, and offered the cross to those who were thinking only of crowns? And yet, truth to Himself, to his mission, to the Father, compelled the renunciation. The unfaltering sagacity, the instinct more than human, showed Him in a moment, that this lip-homage of the crowd was utterly worthless as a factor in the planting of his Kingdom; that He stood, as it were, (as we ourselves sometimes find ourselves standing,) at a point in life, where the roads fork to the right hand and to the left: *one*, leading to fame, power, popularity, worldly distinction; *the other*, to the cross, and through the cross to the Divine Glory of being the Saviour of the world. It was well for *us*, that He chose the latter. It seems impossible that He could have chosen otherwise. And yet, in order that we may learn to love and honour Him as we ought, remember the words: 'We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.'

But it is time to turn our thoughts in another direction. I have spoken of the discourse, which we are considering, as pouring a flood of light, not only upon the principles and methods of Christ's own working, but also upon what one might be allowed to call a true *philosophy of life*. The former has received, I hope, some helpful illustration from what has been already said. Of the latter I would speak now, before I conclude.

We all seek *happiness*. It is our nature to do so. God made us for happiness. Christ came to restore, or to elevate us, to true happiness. The true philosophy of life is that which shall show us, how such happiness is to be obtained. In the

second of the two discourses of this great day of our Lord's ministry we find many hints on this, to *us*, all important subject,—many suggestions for the construction of such a true philosophy of life.

The first step towards such a philosophy is a right understanding of the meaning of life. What does man's life consist in? Does it consist in wealth? Can it be measured by wealth? Well: test it. Here is a rich man, whose wealth is multiplying, as wealth often will multiply. He proposes to make great provision for years of future enjoyment. His philosophy of life expresses itself thus, 'Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.' Yes: but he has omitted one disturbing element altogether from his calculation. What about *death*?

No philosophy of life, then, can be true, which does not take account of death; which does not reckon with death; as a thing most certain, yet most uncertain,—as a thing which *must* come at some moment, and which *may* come at any moment; and which, whenever it comes, will sever, absolutely and everlastingly, our connection with all the *things* of this life:—the *things*, I say, not the *persons*. To make our lives, then, turn upon, or revolve round, the *things* of this life is a most foolish and stupid mistake: a mistake, however, which is perpetually being made, now in one form and now in another; now in the coarse form of living to grow rich, and now in some more subtle but perhaps more dangerous form: a mistake, too, which we never need be deluded into making, for it can be detected at any moment by the application of the homely test, 'Foolish, thoughtless man, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then, whose shall these things be which thou hast provided?'

No philosophy of life, then, is true, which does not take full account of the fact of death. This is one side, upon which Jesus, in the discourse we are considering, attacks this problem,—'How to live? How to seek the happiness for which we feel such an inextinguishable thirst?' He attacks it still more

fundamentally a little further on in the same discourse, in the words : ' But rather seek ye the kingdom of God ; and all these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock ; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom : ' with which we may join the words by which the parable of the foolish rich man is pointed and applied : ' So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God. '


If there is one lesson which the experience of life teaches us more sternly and impressively than another, it is this : That happiness must come to us, if it is to come at all, *unsought* ; that to seek it is *not* to find it. The moment we begin to make it consciously our end and aim, and to live for it,—*that moment* we have guaranteed ourselves against attaining it. It is a wayward, fickle, capricious thing, which is most ours when we woo it least. To pursue it, in the hope of capturing and securing it, is like pursuing, child-fashion, the foot of the rainbow arch ; which, however near it may seem, can never be brought nearer ; and which, by the very law of its being, flees before us, just as fast as we advance towards it.

If we would but listen to Christ, He would teach us to anticipate, and He would arm us against, this sad disappointing experience. ' Seek the kingdom of God, and all these things, '—above all, this happiness which you so thirst after and long for,—' shall be added unto you. ' Give up the search after happiness. It is of no use. ' Seek, ' instead, ' the kingdom of God : ' that is, seek to know God's will better and to do it better : and, behold, to your surprise, the happiness which you sought in vain shall be yours unsought. The more complete the surrender, the more perfect the renunciation of the happiness, the more certain and assured will its subsequent possession be. Not that we buy the happiness by the renunciation of it. There is no real renunciation of it, so long as any such *arrière pensée* or mental reservation is lurking within. The surrender, the self-surrender, must be genuine and thorough ; otherwise it cannot yield the fruit of peace. The Psalmist says : ' Delight

thou in the Lord, and he shall give thee thy heart's desire : ' not meaning, that we may purchase whatever we like by taking delight in God ; but that such delight in God is the very security of joy. So too Jesus says : ' Blessed,'—happy in the highest sense of happiness,—'are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled ;'—filled, that is to say, with the righteousness for which they hunger and thirst. It is not that we seek one thing, and get another. It is that we seek the true thing ; and, in gaining it, we gain something else which is bound up irrevocably and unchangeably with it. For not even God Himself could make us truly and substantially and permanently happy, except through righteousness.

It is ever, as I have often taken occasion to remind you ; it is ever for us a choice between the true centre, *God*, and the false, *self*, when we would describe the circle, or, as it were, strike the arch, of life. 'So is he that layeth up treasure for *himself*, and is not rich toward *God*.' Towards what do the radii of our own lives,—our hopes, fears, desires, wishes, efforts,—tend and converge ? Towards self ? or towards God ? *Which ?* It is surely not very difficult for us to say, which it is. Given an arc of our own lives, is it a very difficult problem to find the centre of it ? Is it indeed possible for us to be really ignorant what the main driftage of our lives is, and whither its currents of aspiration and struggle are carrying us ; whether onwards towards the eternal shore, the will of God, or ever round and back in the eddying pool of the cares, and riches, and pleasures of this life ?

We must pause here ; and, with one last look at our Divine Teacher, take leave of the subject. There is a mass of conventional talking and thinking about Jesus, which gradually yields and disappears like melting snow, as we come by patient study of the Gospels under the light and heat of his true personality. His is not a character to be approached with mere words of fond endearment. There is a majesty, a





grandeur, a sadness, a sternness, about it, which are indeed blended with an inexpressible grace, and tenderness, and peace, and an infinite sympathy, but which leave us with the conviction, that this is no Being to be trifled with, but One to be adored, and bent before, with reverence and godly fear. The feeling which prompts the fond appellations, '*Sweet Jesus*,' '*Dear Jesus*,' is quite true, as far as it goes; but it is not the whole truth. There is something more, which an apostle has described thus: 'The Word of God, even Christ Jesus, is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and discerning the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.' Not that there is the slightest inconsistency between this side of the picture and the other. The very same apostle adds, almost in the same breath, the words already quoted: 'We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.' The terrible, heart-searching Word is also the merciful and faithful high Priest. And the inference which the apostle draws from this marvellous combination of truth and tenderness, severity and mercy, sadness and peace, insight and love, in the same divine-human Priest and Judge, is one most consolatory and reassuring. It is this: 'Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.'

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## SERMON XLIII.

### SAINTLY IDEALS.

REVELATION xix. 8.

The righteousness of saints.

TO-DAY is All Saints' Day; the last great festival of the ecclesiastical year; the roll-call of all the saints and worthies of the generations past. Year by year as it comes round to us, it comes freighted with many memories;—memories not only of the great and good of ages gone, but personal memories of those very dear to *ourselves*, whom we have lost. It is such as these, above all others, who rise before us in thought, as we pray: 'Grant us grace so to follow thy blessed saints in all virtuous and godly living, that we may come to those unspeakable joys, which thou hast prepared for them that unfeignedly love thee.'

I shall not attempt to intrude further upon the privacy of personal affection, nor incur the risk of touching and opening that fountain of sorrow, which on such a day as this rises very near the surface, and may very readily and all unwittingly be touched and opened. I wish, *not* to soften, and, by softening, perhaps to enervate; *but* to rouse and invigorate. Christian action, and Christian endurance, *these* should be the end and aim of all our thoughts to-day. And if memory must do its

part, and if sorrow must have its way, yet *both* may, and should, serve as handmaids and ministers to spiritual edification and growth in grace.

The *saintly life*—the righteousness of saints—this, in brief, it is, which is set before us as the object of desire and of prayer to-day. But what is it? We do but offer the service of fools, if we pray for it, and profess to desire it, without clearly understanding, and being able to describe to ourselves, what it is. *This*, then,—this question and the answer to it,—must be the starting-point of our discourse to-night.

A very slight acquaintance with the lives of those who may most truly be called saints will satisfy us that they are not all cast in one mould. On the contrary, they are characterized by an almost infinite variety, diversity, and even contrariety of form. But in the midst of all this, and beneath all this contrariety, diversity, and variety, there may be traced a fundamental unity, a substantial identity. Features and form are endlessly different; the spirit is *one*.

I do not speak now of the mere surroundings and outward circumstances of a life. It needs no words to show that these *do*, and *must*, vary indefinitely; and that the saintly life is entirely independent of them. It *may* be lived, it *has* been lived, on a throne, in a palace. It may also be lived, it has been lived, in a little two-roomed house, up a dingy court, out of a back street, in some huge smoke-begrimed manufacturing town. It is true that there are circumstances which seem specially favourable, or specially unfavourable, to the development of it. But no circumstances whatever have power, of themselves, to prevent its growth, or to kill it outright. Nay, it can even press all circumstances, however untoward, into its service, and compel them to minister to its development. Riches and poverty, solitude and society, sickness and health, all may be said to come alike to it; inasmuch as it is independent of all, and can turn all to good account.

We may represent human life, the life of each one of us, to

ourselves, as a series of concentric circles, circle within circle, all having the same centre, and that centre being the 'I,' the soul, the spirit, the will, the very substance of 'our human personality, call it by what name we will. What we describe as the '*circumstances*' of our lives will be represented by the outermost of these concentric circles. But we may pass inwards from one to another on our way to the centre of all, and still find endless variety and diversity, and yet the saintly life still.

Thus we will take what is certainly much nearer to the centre than the circle already described, which was that of outward circumstance and surrounding. We will take the circle of ritual and worship, which, you will all agree, touches the *soul* much more nearly than the outward form or fashion of our lives *does*, or *can* do. At this moment, in this town, Divine worship is being conducted in some fifty or sixty places, I should suppose,—with more or less of pomp and splendour and ornateness, *here*,—with more or less of baldness, bareness, and simplicity, *there*;—*here*, in silence and passivity; *there*, with 'the voice of a great multitude, as the voice of many waters.' Think you that the saintly life is beyond the reach of the worshippers in any one of these fifty or sixty places, *because* the ritual of worship is too ornate or too bare, too silent or too loud? *Not so*. When, some half-hour hence, the worship is over and the congregations are dismissed, from every one of those places, doubt it not, there will return to their homes souls that have been in communion with the one God and Father of the spirits of all flesh, members of the mystical body of Christ, comrades in the one communion and fellowship of God's elect.

Let us take another illustration. Let our thoughts range back over the history of this our own beloved place of worship. What changes and varieties of ritual has it not witnessed in the course of the many centuries that have elapsed between its first conversion from a pagan temple into a Christian Church, and the present moment! Each generation in turn has

worshipped here after its own fashion,—now with Roman splendour, and now with Puritan simplicity,—now with beauty, and now with ugliness: and in each generation in turn, whatever their fashion of worship, souls have been trained here for heaven and glory. God forbid that the sober masculine stateliness of our own present ritual should be any hindrance or any impediment to the great work of conversion and edification which ought to be going on here. If it *be*,—as it certainly need not be,—then, in God's name, away with it! Better the coldest, barest, ugliest ritual, *with* spiritual edification, than the costliest and most beautiful and most ornate, *without*.

We pass yet again *within*,—nearer and nearest to the innermost circle and centre of all. We take the circle of religious opinion, of doctrine and dogma; which is indeed the very vesture of the soul. For our intellectual beliefs, our modes of thought upon religious questions,—what are they but the garment, as it were, and most immediate environment of the soul; an environment, which acts upon the soul, and upon which the soul reacts, at once moulding and moulded? The saintly life, therefore, cannot but be deeply affected by this intellectual environment; and, according to the nature of that environment, accordingly, to a great extent, will that life be conceived of and lived. Yet, even in this nearest circle of all, it is astonishing to note the amount of possible variety and diversity that is consistent with that fundamental unity and substantial identity of which we have still to speak. I am not going to unchristianize either Romanists on the one side, or Quakers and Unitarians on the other; however grievously mistaken I may hold both to be in matters of religious opinion and doctrine. I am content to take my definition of the Catholic Church from our own Prayer Book, and to believe that it includes '*all who profess and call themselves Christians*.' I dare not doubt, that the saintly life has been lived, and is being lived, by men and women who stand at the very opposite poles of religious opinion,

and between whom no intellectual fellowship on religious questions is possible.

But putting out of sight the wide differences which separate the various Christian Denominations from one another, and confining ourselves to our own Church of England, and even to this church in which we ourselves worship as our fathers worshipped before us ; it is surprising to see what a large range of difference in religious opinion is possible and permissible, and how loose and adaptable is the intellectual vesture which one generation of Christian people after another will put on. The memories of some two or three of you—I grieve to think that it should now be only some two or three—will readily go back to the ministry which was exercised in this church during the first quarter, and a little more, of this century ; a *ministry* which struck its roots so deep in the intellect and affections of the hearers, that to this day, after an interval of more than five and forty years, it is my happiness to hear it spoken of with a freshness of interest and gratitude, as though it had been terminated but yesterday. I often wish that I could use the same intellectual forms of religious thought that *he* used. But I *cannot* : it is *impossible*. Were he amongst us now, *he* would speak differently : with the same fervour, zeal, and earnestness, with the same love and reverence for truth, with the same fearless utterance, but with an altered intellectual dress and form. It *must* be so. Within certain limits, wide yet fixed, there is a constant, incessant flux and flow of religious opinion, from one century to another, from one generation to another, from one decade to another. Without such incessant flux and flow there could be no *vitality* of religious thought. For whatever else life may involve, it certainly involves change. To stereotype thought is to kill it : to stereotype religious thought is to destroy its fructifying, generating, or regenerating power. The word of God, if it is to be spoken with power, must be spoken under the influences, and according to the intellectual, as well as the moral and spiritual, necessities of the day in

which it is spoken. To borrow our modes of thought and speech from the repertory of a past generation however excellent, or from teachers however devout and learned in their day, is to be, at the best, but as a scribe half instructed unto the kingdom of God. For our Saviour said : ' Every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things *new and old.*'

We pass through all these circles, which, even to the last, are still external, to that innermost circle which is the centre of all. Circumstance, ritual, religious opinion, *these all* have their influence upon the saintly life ; and that influence intensifies and gathers force, as we pass from the first to the second, and from the second to the third ; but these are not the soul and secret of the saintly life itself. *What* is that inner fundamental unity, that substantial identity, of which we are in search, and which constitutes the veritable communion of saints ; the true, everlasting bond of fellowship between God's elect, past, present, and to come, here and hereafter ?

The answer is not far to seek : but an example will be better than any definition. Not many of you, perhaps, will have read the life of David Brainerd, missionary to the Indian tribes of North America about the middle of last century. But many of you, I do not doubt, will have read the life of Henry Martyn, who was a missionary in Bengal and Persia at the commencement of the present century. The biography of David Brainerd, written by the well-known President Edwards, was the delight of Henry Martyn ; and the two men were verily men of one heart and of one soul. Brainerd was a man of extraordinary zeal and self-devotion, utterly regardless of comfort and health and life itself, if only he might preach the Gospel and do something to advance and enlarge the kingdom of God. If ever there was a saint on earth, he was one. A fortnight before his death he spoke thus : ' My heaven is, to please God and glorify him, and to give all to him, and to be wholly devoted to his glory ;

that is the heaven which I long for ; that is my religion, and that is my happiness, and always was, ever since I knew anything of true religion ; and all those that are of that religion shall meet me in heaven. Had I a thousand souls, if they were worth anything, I would give them all to God ; but I have nothing to give, when all is done. It is impossible for any rational creature to be happy without acting all for God : God himself could not make him happy any other way. There is nothing in the world worth living for, but doing good and finishing God's work ; doing the work that Christ did. I see nothing else in the world that can yield any satisfaction, besides living to God, pleasing Him, and doing his whole will.'

In these burning words we see the very soul of the saintly life laid bare to view. In point of religious *opinion* Brainerd was an extreme Calvinist : the intellectual circle of his ideas was such as I, for one, could have no sympathy with. But all *that* drops out of view, when the hand of death is upon him and he is describing out of his own experience the nature of the life that is hid with Christ in God. He defines it in that extreme moment, when he is face to face with eternity, as living to God, living to do the whole will of God.

I turn from the saintly Calvinist, Brainerd, to the very opposite pole of religious opinion. I take up that little familiar work, known, I trust, to most of you, 'The Imitation of Christ,' by the equally saintly Romanist, Thomas à Kempis. I open it, and I read these quaint, wise, and wholesome words :—

'My son, now will I teach thee the way of peace and true liberty.

'O Lord, I beseech Thee, do as Thou sayest, for this is delightful to me to hear.

'Be desirous, my son, to do the will of another rather than thine own.

'Choose always to have less rather than more.

'Seek always the lowest place, and to be inferior to every one.



‘Wish always, and pray, that the will of God may be wholly fulfilled in thee.

‘Behold, such a man entereth within the borders of peace and rest.’

You see, that, when they come to the root of the matter, the Calvinist and the Romanist are as one. ‘I see nothing else in the world that can yield any satisfaction besides living to God, pleasing Him, and doing his whole will:’ such is the dying confession of Brainerd. ‘Wish always, and pray, that the will of God may be wholly fulfilled in thee:’ so writes the devout à Kempis. And we might multiply such statements from the lips and pens of the saints of one generation after another, almost without number,—whatever their intellectual creed, and what men call their ‘Denomination.’ But why spend time on the testimony of those, who are, after all, but the satellites of the Sun of righteousness? Listen to the language of Him, who is the King of Saints, the faithful and true witness:—‘My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish his work.’ ‘Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.’

Saints we already are,—we all of us are,—in name, by title and profession, according to the Scripture meaning of the word ‘*Saints*,’ that is, persons *consecrated* or *dedicated* to God. The sacrifice of Christ is the consecration of the whole world of men: and that which was thus done *once* for *all* is done for *each*, or is applied to *each*, in the waters of Christian baptism. Over each infant, over each adult, whom we would baptize, our Church teaches us to pray, ‘Grant that whosoever is here dedicated to Thee by our office and ministry may also be endued with heavenly virtues, and everlastingly rewarded, through thy mercy, O blessed Lord God, who dost live and govern all things world without end.’

Saints we are by title: but woe to us, if we rest content with being mere titular saints! To the outward consecration must be added the inward sanctification, which converts the name

into a reality ; the righteousness of saints,—the saintly life,—the ‘ virtuous and godly living ’ of our Collect. We see now very clearly, in what that life or righteousness consists ; that it consists, above everything else, in devotion to the will of God, in the reconciliation of our wills to his holy and blessed Will, alike in action and in suffering, in joy and in sorrow. Here is the root of the matter. And this root has such marvellous virtue in it, that it will grow and flourish and bear fruit in *any* soil of circumstance, of ritual, of religious opinion. But if it is to do this, it must be cultivated with all diligence, by watching, by striving, by praying,—by incessant struggles against the snares and temptations and enticements of the world, the flesh, and the devil,—by repeated efforts after self-mastery and self-renunciation,—in a word, by earnest imitation of Christ in the power of the Spirit of Christ. None can say, ‘ This life, this righteousness, is not for *me* : I am not called to it : it is out of *my* reach.’ It is *not* out of the reach of any one of us : every one of us is called to it. See that we ‘ give diligence to make that calling and election sure.’

I have spoken in vain to-night, if I have not helped you to trace what I call the *one spirit*, underlying the *endless difference* of feature and form ; and if I have not stirred up your minds to seek more earnestly than ever to possess and be possessed by that one spirit. And now, ere I take leave of a subject so interesting surely and so profitable, I would add yet another word or two about that endless variety and diversity of form and feature, in which the one spirit incarnates itself, and under which it is too often shrouded and hidden altogether from view. No two Christian characters are exactly alike, any more than two human faces are exactly alike. They are diverse, as you pass from one individual to another in the same generation ; *diverse*, but along with a certain family likeness. They are diverse, again, as you pass from one generation to another : the family likeness itself is different. The type or pattern of Christian goodness alters in its external manifestation from

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